

“The Life was the Light”: Magnificent celebration organised by the Holy Archdiocese of Australia in honour of the Ecumenical Patriarch



The filial love, respect and gratitude of the faithful of the Holy Archdiocese of Australia towards the revered person of His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew were expressed through a magnificent and deeply moving anniversary celebration, entitled “The Life was the Light” (Ἡ Ζωή ἦν τό φῶς), which took place at the Grand Cevahir Hotel & Convention Centre, in the Şişli district of Constantinople, on the very day marking exactly 35 years since the election of His All-Holiness to the Apostolic and Ecumenical Throne (22 October 1991 – 22 October 2026).

The event was organised at the initiative of the Holy Eparchial Synod of the Archdiocese of Australia, with the young men and women of the Greek Orthodox Christian Society of Sydney serving as its principal organisers and participants. The large audience enjoyed a special tribute tracing significant milestones in the life

and illustrious journey of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, through a rich programme which began with a poem written and set to music in honour of the Ecumenical Patriarch, and also included hymns, songs, dances and theatrical performances.

As His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia noted in his address, this anniversary celebration was not intended to present yet another account of the truly magnificent and glorious 35-year Patriarchate of His All-Holiness Bartholomew. "We wished to offer Your All-Holiness something much more personal from ourselves," he emphasised, addressing the Ecumenical Patriarch, and continued: "Something born of our love, an overflowing of our hearts, an expression of filial gratitude, a living testimony to all that Your venerable and holy person means to us." His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia then spoke from the heart about the revered Primate of Orthodoxy, drawing upon several verses from the song Prayer (Prosefchi), written and composed by Haris Alexiou:

"Give me a boundary along which to walk,
Give me a name so that I may not lose my way,
Give me a dream to hold on to,
Give me a vision so that I may resist,
Give me a child to whom I may confess."

Analysing these verses one by one, he portrayed, in a distinctive and moving manner, the personality, work and contribution of the Ecumenical Patriarch. In summary, the Archbishop emphasised that the Patriarchal ministry of His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew "was not confined to human plans, was not limited by conventional reasoning, and was not advanced by the perishable powers of this world." "Patriarch Bartholomew is drawn by a force that continually grows stronger," he stressed, continuing:

"He is an extraordinary figure with a particular mission, something that does not occur frequently in human history. And his Patriarchate is precious and invaluable, because it is not confined merely to his own person, but extends throughout the entire world and becomes a source of hope and light for us all. And whatever belongs to us all possesses great and immeasurable value, because it has a future and gives life."

Before concluding his address, His Eminence Archbishop Makarios expressed his gratitude for the presence of the Greek Minister of Culture, Ms Lina Mendoni, and the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ms Alexandra Papadopoulou, who represented the Greek Government. He then invited Ms Mendoni to address the

gathering, and she delivered a warm greeting.



He also expressed heartfelt thanks to all those who contributed to and supported the anniversary celebration, making particular mention of the Holy Eparchial Synod; Archimandrite of the Ecumenical Throne, Fr Eusebios, Abbot of the Holy Monastery of Panagia Pantanassa in Mangrove; and the youth of the Greek Orthodox Christian Society of Sydney, who, as he observed, “worked exceptionally hard for this event and wished to demonstrate that love for the Mother Church and the Patriarch is not limited by geographical distances.” Finally, filled with emotion, the Archbishop of Australia presented the Ecumenical Patriarch with a symbolic gift: an oil lamp dating from the sixth century BC.

Connecting this historic artefact with the title of the celebration, “The Life was the Light,” he dedicated a four-line verse to His All-Holiness:

“As the ages grow old,
And as the years pass by,
The lamp grows old, but never
Does its light grow old.”

He concluded by emphasising: “Your own light will never grow old, no matter how many years may pass. Many years to Your All-Holiness.”

His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew then delivered his response,

thanking Archbishop Makarios and offering paternal words to the pilgrims from Australia who were present, as well as to all his spiritual children on the Fifth Continent. The magnificent celebration concluded with the chanting of the Polychronion in honour of His All-Holiness, amid an atmosphere of indescribable spiritual joy and profound emotion.

Following the conclusion of the event, an official dinner was hosted in honour of His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. The celebration was honoured by the presence of the following Holy Hierarchs:

Their Eminences, Elder Metropolitan Emmanuel of Chalcedon; Elder Metropolitan Apostolos of Derkoi; Metropolitan Nektarios of Anthedon; Metropolitan Ezekiel of Dervis; Metropolitan Seraphim of Sevasteia; Metropolitan Ignatios of Demetrias; Metropolitan Theodoritos of Laodicea; Metropolitan Makarios of Sidirokastro; Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco; Metropolitan Athenagoras of Belgium; Metropolitan Kyrillos of Rhodes; Metropolitan Barnabas of Neapolis and Stavroupolis; Archbishop Evgenios of Crete; Metropolitan Kyrillos of Krini; Metropolitan Daniel of Pamphilos; Metropolitan Nathanael of Kos and Nisyros; Archbishop Elpidophoros of America; Metropolitan Athenagoras of Kydonies; Metropolitan Cleopas of Sweden and All Scandinavia; Metropolitan Ioustinos of Nea Krini and Kalamaria; Metropolitan Kyrillos of Imbros and Tenedos; Metropolitan Maximos of Switzerland; Metropolitan Iakovos of Ireland; Metropolitan Andreas of Saranta Ekklesies; Metropolitan Ioakeim of Bursa; Metropolitan Bartholomew of Polyani and Kilkis; Metropolitan Theodoros of Seleucia; Metropolitan Athenagoras of New Jersey; Metropolitan Damaskinos of Aetolia; and Metropolitan Dorotheos of Drama. Also present were Their Graces the Regional Bishops and members of the Holy Eparchial Synod of the Archdiocese of Australia: Bishop Elpidios of Perth, Bishop Silouan of Adelaide, Bishop Kyriakos of Melbourne, Bishop Evmenios of Chora, Bishop Bartholomew of Brisbane and Bishop Athinagoras of Canberra.

The following Auxiliary Bishops were also in attendance: Their Graces, Bishop Iakovos of Miletoupolis, Bishop Nikiforos of Amorion, Bishop Adrianos of Halicarnassus, Bishop Damaskinos of Dorylaion, Bishop Smaragdos of Daphnousia, Bishop Raphael of Ilion, Bishop Christodoulos of Magnesia, Bishop Paisios of Xanthoupolis, Bishop Phanourios of Tyana, Bishop Bartholomew of Elaia, Bishop Panaretos of Tamisos and Bishop Isidoros of Andidon.



Also in attendance were Archons of the Holy Great Church of Christ, clergy and monastics; the Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople, His Beatitude Sahak Mashalian; the Chief Rabbi of Turkey, the Very Reverend David Sivio; and the Apostolic Nuncio of the Holy See to Turkey and Azerbaijan, His Excellency Archbishop Marek Solczynski, accompanied by the Deputy Head of the diplomatic mission.

Representatives of other Christian Churches and denominations were also present, together with the Consul General of Greece in Constantinople, Ambassador Konstantinos Koutras; the Consuls General of Australia, Bulgaria, Switzerland, Spain, Croatia, Moldova, Ukraine and Poland; the Deputy Consul General of the Czech Republic; the Consul of Ukraine; and representatives of the Consulate General of the United States and the European Union.

The celebration was further attended by representatives of the Turkish state authorities, local government, the academic community and the country's intellectual circles.

Among them were the Governor of Istanbul, Mr Davut Gül; the Istanbul Chief of Police, Mr Selami Yıldız; the District Governor of Imbros, Mr Osman Acar; the District Governor of Çanakkale, Mr. Mustafa Baki; the Mayor of the Imbros community, Mr. Mehmet Akif Akar and







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