

Message from His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia on the Anniversary of the 28th October 1940



Each year, at this time, the historic events that comprise the heroic Epic of 1940 come alive in our memory. We conjure up images of the young men of our homeland bidding farewell to their parents, siblings, wives, and children and, as Archbishop Chrysanthos Philippidis (the Archbishop during the time of the “OXI”) so aptly wrote, “taking upon their shoulders the Cross of Christ and of the Homeland”, and waging the “struggle for faith, justice and freedom.” Stirring images come alive in our minds of the snow-capped mountains of Pindus and Albania, and of the endless marches that our heroes endured amidst great hardship.

These images fill our hearts with emotion, but also with pride, as we reflect upon how a poor nation, undaunted by the might of the invaders, courageously stood its

ground and succeeded in achieving the first victory of the Allied forces at a time when the triumph of the darkness of fascism and Nazism across the European continent seemed inevitable.

Indeed, we have every reason to feel admiration and pride as we recall the heroic deeds of the heroes of 1940, but also of the universal resistance of our forebears, who demonstrated that the greatness of a people is not determined by numerical superiority or the weapons at its disposal, but by its unconquered spirit, its unity, its devotion to lofty ideals and its unwavering faith in God.

However, whenever we commemorate the historic "NO" and the glorious Epic of 1940, we must also remember that behind the pages of glory written on the battlefronts were the stories of ordinary people who left behind their families and their dreams, departing from their homes without knowing if they would ever return. There were also families who endured months of anguish and anxious waiting; parents who ultimately mourned the loss of their children; women who lost their companions; and children who grew up carrying the wound of being orphaned.

We truly honour these people only when we reflect upon the heavy price of their struggle, the trials they endured and the sacrifices they were called to make. Then memory becomes responsibility, and that responsibility calls us to prove ourselves worthy of them in the face of the challenges and threats of our own age. Our era may not demand sacrifices of the same magnitude as those of the dark days of the 1940s; nevertheless, it demands vigilance, unity of purpose and the courage to defend our beliefs and ideals, both when doing so is easy and painless and when it requires us to step out of our security and comfort.

Recognising, therefore, the responsibility we bear towards those who risked their lives, endured hardship, suffered and sacrificed themselves for us, we too must continue our journey with virtue and courage, drawing inspiration from their example. In the face of any threat to, or challenge against, the sacred and cherished values of our Nation, let us affirm our love for our homeland and our steadfast faith in Christ. In the face of injustice, let us not remain silent, but raise our voices with courage in defence of what is right. In the face of any affront to human dignity, let us respond with an unwavering respect for every human being, regardless of race, religion, beliefs or any other distinction. And when we are surrounded by the cries of those who advocate war, let our own voice always be a voice of reconciliation and a defence of peace.

With these thoughts, I wish everyone manyblessed years, and may the Most HolyTheotokos always protect our homeland,strengthen our people, and intercede beforethe Lord for the peace of the whole world!