

## **Archbishop Makarios of Australia: “We are living in unprecedented times for humanity”**



### **Archbishop Makarios of Australia conducted a memorial service for the eternal repose of the coronavirus victims**

**Archbishop Makarios of Australia held a memorial service for the repose of the coronavirus victims on Friday, 31 July, at the Cathedral of the Annunciation of our Lady Theotokos in Redfern, Sydney. During the service, His Eminence commemorated the names of the Greek people who recently passed away and, in particular, those who were residents at the St Basil’s aged care facility in Melbourne.**

“We have gathered here today, devastated by the events of recent weeks, to pray for the repose of the souls of all the victims of the pandemic, which has ravaged our country and all of humanity,” he said in the beginning of his talk at the memorial and continued, “We are specifically commemorating the names of our brethren who have fallen asleep and who were residents at St Basil’s in Melbourne and we wholeheartedly pray for strength and consolation to be granted from on high to their relatives and families who are undergoing this difficult trial with the

loss of their loved ones.”

Archbishop Makarios reassured the relatives and friends of the victims that all of the Greek Orthodox Church of Australia is mourning with them and especially the staff who have worked with dedication at St Basil’s. “Certainly, their pain is also our pain,” he emphasised. “The anguish that they are experiencing, we are experiencing as well”, he added and noted: “My humble self, as your Archbishop and Shepherd, as well as the God-loving Bishops in Australia, all the clergy of our local Church, the co-workers and the members of our institutions, are co-suffering over the deaths of our brethren. Also suffering and mourning together with us, together with the relatives of the coronavirus victims are the people, who for so many years have served with dedication in the sacred mission with which they have been entrusted by St Basil’s.

All the management and staff of our facility in Melbourne, who for years have cared for our residents with much love as if they were their own parents, as if they were their own grandfathers and grandmothers, these days each of them, individually, is grieving heavily. It is as if they have lost members of their own family. It would be unjust to deny this; no matter how much sadness and pain, panic and resentment inevitably prevails during these difficult moments.”

His Eminence then appealed for patience and understanding, noting that “I, personally, like the entire Greek community, judging by the accumulated experience of the past, we cannot erase and ignore the long-lasting good testimony of this institution within Australian society. “I ask all people to be patient and give us time,” he emphasised and added, “I am, personally, looking into the situation and will not hesitate, if necessary, to make tough decisions for the good of the organisation.”

**“As for the relatives of the victims”, he continued, “I assure them that the Church will not wrong them, as it has not ever done so before. I plead that they show patience and understanding, bearing in mind that we are living in unprecedented times for humanity. No one can manage the pandemic unless a cure is found.”**





The Archbishop also conveyed the sympathy and condolences of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew as well as the condolences of the political leadership of Greece. “I am in frequent communication with our Ecumenical Patriarch”, he said, “who commiserates with the relatives of the victims and shares our grief. I convey to all the families his condolences and prayers for the repose of our brethren who have fallen asleep. Similarly, I convey the condolences of the Prime Minister of Greece, Mr Kyriakos Mitsotakis and the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs with responsibility for the Greeks Abroad, Mr Konstantinos Vlasis.”

He also stressed that he is in constant and close cooperation with the relevant government authorities of Victoria as well as the authorities of St Basil’s in order to deal with the current situation in the best way possible. “I have spoken with the Minister for Health, Mr Greg Hunt and Minister for Aged Care, Mr Richard Colbeck” he noted, “and often, daily, I am brought up to date by the relevant people at St Basil’s. Together and with all our strength, we continue to support the difficult effort that is evolving”, he said, “in order to overcome the current ordeal and to eliminate any danger to the residents of St Basil’s from now on. We similarly support the other eleven facilities of St Basil’s throughout Australia, in which not a single case of the coronavirus has been recorded,” he added.

His Eminence did not fail to mention the people with coronavirus who are currently

in hospital, making special reference to the vulnerable group of the elderly and praying for their speedy recovery. "At the same time, our thoughts are with all Greek people and all our fellow citizens who are hospitalised due to being infected with the coronavirus, as well as with their families who are in anguish", he stressed. "We pray for their speedy recovery", he continued, "so that neither the Greek community nor Australian society mourns any further deaths. We are particularly anxious and praying for our fellow humans who belong to vulnerable groups, such as the elderly given, as is well-known, that more than 60 aged care facilities in metropolitan Melbourne and in all of Victoria have outbreaks, with confirmed cases amounting to many hundreds."

Finally, he strongly appealed for compliance with the measures for the protection from the pandemic, while calling on everyone to intensify their prayers for an end to this ongoing trial. "We continue to reiterate our fervent request to the Greek Orthodox flock and to all our fellow citizens for respect and compliance with the guidelines and protective measures announced by the government authorities," he underlined, "in order to prevent the further spread of the pandemic and to effectively protect public health. As Orthodox Christians," he said, "we must maintain our hope in God, constantly intensifying our prayers for an end to this difficult ordeal. Personally, I am convinced that with God's help, we will soon overcome it. I invite everyone to join a concerted effort in prayer, patience, hope and love."

