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Ecumenical Patriarch on the Great Feast of the Transfiguration



Ecumenical Patriarch: 'We continue with prayer, determination and with our heads held high'

In his address to the faithful after the celebration of the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Monastery of the Transfiguration of the Savior of the First of the Princes' Islands, His All-Holiness referred to the constant struggle of the Romiosini to survive in the home of our ancestors

The Great Feast of the Holy Transfiguration of Christ the Savior was celebrated in a solemn atmosphere on the First of the Princes' Islands, where His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew presided in Chorostasia on August 6, 2020. A representative of the Armenian Patriarchate in Istanbul was present, and the Archons of the Ecumenical Throne and a large number of believers were at the church. The sermon was preached by the faithful Deacon Paisios, Director of the Special Patriarchal Office. At the end of the Divine Liturgy, His All-Holiness, in accord with tradition, blessed the grapes, and immediately afterwards performed a

Trisagion for the repose of the soul of the Benefactor of the Genos Symeon Siniosoglou, in front of his tomb, which is located in the courtyard of the Monastery. On the grounds of the Monastery, at the top of the hill of the island, every summer the children's camps of the Ecumenical Patriarchate operate, where children of the Greek Omogeneia and others are hosted. However, this year, due to the pandemic, their operation was suspended.

"We are accustomed, through our history, through the ages, to live 'in glory and dishonor,' as the Apostle Paul says, 'in ill repute and good repute,' 'as dying, and behold we live.' Our English-speaking friends would say that we go through 'ups and downs,'" the Ecumenical Patriarch emphasized in his address, which took place in the courtyard of the Monastery, and continued: "We have the pleasant, we have the unpleasant, but, as Mr. Komvopoulos said, the beloved Diamantis, we continue under any circumstances, we do not give up, we do not hand over the baton, we do not relinquish the mandate."

"The struggle continues"

His All-Holiness then referred to the renovation and upgrade work on the existing facilities of "Paidopoleos," which had previously been presented by the Chairperson of the Board of Directors, Mrs. Maria Apostolidou, and its Administrator, Mr. Diamantis Komvopoulos, and which are carried out under the care of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and with the assistance of ecclesiastical communities of Istanbul, but also that of many famous and anonymous donors.

"All this is done out of love and affection for our children. Everything is done with a Romaic stubbornness, with a Romaic pride, that we do not stop the struggle. I wrote in a text of mine these last days, that the struggle continues. The struggle for survival. The struggle for the continuation of our morals and customs, of our traditions. The struggle for Romiosini in our City to be continuous, permanent and eternal. Conditions can change; we can have, both as persons and as a Genos, as Romiosini, as Hellenes, sorrows, bitterness, disappointments. We stand against them. We continue with prayer, determination and with our heads held high. That is why I came here today without the children, to celebrate, to provide the presence of the Mother Church. I did not go to Prinkipo, as I go every year to the Church of the Holy Transfiguration of Christ the Savior in Prinkipo on this day. I asked my brother, the Metropolitan Geron of the Princes' Islands, to officiate there and I, because I did not come to the opening of the Paidopoleos, I came today to the feast of the church, to say with my presence and with my presiding in Chorostasia that the Mother Church does not forget this foundation here, on the hill of the First of the Princes' Islands, in our Tabor, where for decades now we offer to

the children of the Greek Omogeneia, and not only them, recreation, entertainment, rest and renewal of their physical and mental strength, in order to continue their struggle as students with greater relish, a better attitude, and more strength.

“I take this opportunity, after what Mr. Komvopoulos enumerated for us, to thank, on behalf of the Mother Church, all the named and anonymous donors, to thank my brother of holy Derkon and my Chancellor, Fr. Andreas, who, on behalf of the Mother Church, show a continuous lively interest in the renovation work carried out here, but also in our communities, starting with the community of Chalcedon, and the individuals, the patriotic individual expatriates, who often to the detriment of their own professional pursuits, at the expense of their rest, at the expense of their family obligations, are engaged with the public, either here in our Paidopoleos, or in other public benefit institutions and public events. And so the Omogeneia, despite its reduction in size, despite the problems it faces, continues the struggle to survive, always in the hope that better days will come. ‘Tomorrow you will stay,’ as our ancestors used to say. And among these who stayed, the best things, the greatest things we hope for is the removal of the characterization of many of our properties, around 25, as occupied, and among them are our Monasteries of the Princes’ Islands. It is an unfair measure, which has been taken by the government authorities for decades, and I always wonder by what criteria, why should about 25 of our benevolent institutions and our communities specifically be mazbut and not something else? And why, in general, should there be this category of occupied, while there are Romiosini, there are parishioners in the specific churches that are considered occupied, why not hold elections? And since I said the word ‘elections,’ this does not only concern our occupied properties, but unfortunately our entire Omogeneia and all minorities. Inexplicably, our current government refuses to allow elections to be held to renew the governing bodies that will be in charge of the administration and management of the community property of the Romiosini in general, of the minorities in general, and of each of us individually. This is also a deprivation of our democratic right. Many times we knocked on the doors of the appropriate ministers; we always left full of promises which remain unfulfilled. As the years go by, community leaders diminish, either by physical loss, by the death of some of them, or by their emigration to other countries, and we get to the point where we can no longer run the institutions we have received as a valuable heritage and as a valuable legacy from our ancestors. We hope that we will finally be heard, that the elections will be allowed, which arbitrarily and suddenly stopped at some point. Six or seven years have passed and we are still waiting for the lifting of this ban.”

The Ecumenical Patriarch then conveyed the blessings of the Mother Church to those present, invoking the grace of the Transfigured Lord, and wishing all “Happy Feast of the Virgin,” referred to the Great Feast of the Dormition of the Blessed Theotokos, which is characterized as the Pascha of summer.

“It is a day when the All-Holy Virgin rose from the earth to the heavenly chambers. It is a day of mourning according to our human criteria, but it is a day of joy, because she has moved with Her body to the heavens, and from there she constantly advocates for the whole of the human race. In falling asleep, the Theotokos did not abandon the world. By the grace of God, on that great day of Christianity, I will personally be in my hometown of Imbros, where I was recently, and we enthroned the new Metropolitan of Imbros and Tenedos, with whom we went to Tenedos a few days later, and his enthronement took place there, in the second part of his Province, and we also celebrated the 200th anniversary of our church in Tenedos, which is dedicated to the Dormition of the Theotokos,” said His All-Holiness, and he recalled that Tenedos belonged ecclesiastically to the Diocese of Mytilene until the Treaty of Lausanne. “It was ‘Mytilene and Tenedos.’ And after the Treaty of Lausanne, when Imbros and Tenedos were awarded to the Turkish Republic, Tenedos annexed Imbros, and they became a single Metropolis. And we have the great pleasure of choosing and placing there a relatively new and very dynamic, active and hardworking Shepherd, who promises a great deal for the future of our two islands, which you all know how much their inhabitants have suffered, their Roman inhabitants for centuries, in the 1960s were forced to take their possessions and leave, leaving all their property, their whole life, behind them. Now, with the reopening of our schools there, fortunately, a period of rebirth, reconstruction, has begun, and that gives us auspicious prospects for the future of our islands.”

On the occasion, he also referred to the new celebration of the Festival of the Monastery of Panagia Soumela, which had been suspended after 2015, due to the restoration work that was being carried out.

“As we all know, this year, after the completion of the systematic and long-term renovation works, the service will take place again in Panagia Soumela, in this Palladion of Orthodoxy, in the mountains of Pontus, which is the great pilgrimage of our Pontian brothers. I decided this year not to go in person, but to ask three brother Metropolitans to do the service and the festival. I predict that there will be an influx of believers and I wish for this with all my heart.”

Concluding his speech, His All-Holiness said that on August 23, on the Enniamera

Panagias, he will go to Artaki of Kyzikos, where in the ruins of the Monastery of Panagia Faneromeni, he will perform the Divine Liturgy, as has been the case since 2015. He even expressed the warm gratitude of the Mother Church to the mayor of Artaki for the important help he offers every year and his warm hospitality to all the pilgrims.

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