23/07/2021

Archdiocese of Thyateira & Great Britain – Encyclical for the 1974 invasion of Cyprus



The Reverend Priests, the Honourable Presidents and the Members of the Parish Councils, Ladies Auxiliary Associations and School Committees and the devout Flock of the Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain

ARCHBISHOP'S ENCYCLICAL ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE JULY-AUGUST 1974 INVASION OF CYPRUS

Beloved in the Lord,

Certain points in history stand out in our recollection as occasions of triumph and joy, which we collectively recognize as worthy of remembrance and celebration, while other historical events are remembered mainly by the scars that they have left in our minds and on our hearts, by the pain and anger that endure from generation to generation; all such events do not fade from memory and cannot be forgotten. Here in the United Kingdom, where our community is made up of a majority of Greek Cypriots, our hearts and minds travel to Cyprus each July as we

all recall the violent invasion that was perpetrated 47 years ago by the Turkish military forces. Since then, the island of Aphrodite remains divided and scarred, with a large portion under foreign dominion. But the deepest wounds inflicted by the invasion were suffered by the families who mourn until today the loss of sons and daughters who nobly fought to defend the independence of their island nation, who gave their lives in defense of their native land. The stories of their sacrifice and the devastating events of those tragic days are kept alive in our community's memory. Today, we also remember and pray the missing persons. We shall not remain silent in our pursuit for answers and justice.

As solemn bearers of these memories, it is our responsibility as a Church, as a community, and as human beings, to call upon the world to correct this injustice and to end the forced partition of a sovereign state. Those who guaranteed and made promises that Cyprus would remain free, independent and united must step forward and honour the bonds of promises and commitments made. Nations which speak of justice, freedom, truth, peace, stability and other similar expressions of lofty and desirable ideals, cannot also sit and remain idle with their conscience at ease while injustice stands. The Church is not an agent of revenge, anger or retribution. She is, though, the voice of Truth, the harbour of ultimate human freedom, and the lighthouse of divine justice. In this capacity, she calls upon all Her children and all the world to join in unity to correct the errors and sins of the past. The Berlin Wall fell years ago and the Iron Curtain no longer exists. Why should Cyprus still be separated and torn in two, left to suffer at the hands of injustice? Truth and justice cannot be whole as long as they are administered as privileges for some few, while others remain deprived.

Beloved people of God, remember that we are first and foremost children of the Church and in Christ there is always hope. We must therefore put aside everything that may divide us and become as one voice, one heart, and one mind, and only then, as witnesses to the faith, hope, and love that Christ places in our hearts, will we be able to reach out to those beyond our community in order to educate about the truth of our history and to share the pain that we also carry. Only if and when we stand together, united, shall we see the change we long for in our innermost being become a reality in the history of the world. This coming Sunday, when we attend Liturgy and conduct the annual Memorial Services as we do every summer, let us humble ourselves and ask God to send His grace to guide the hearts and minds of all, so that the good, proper and necessary solution be found for a free and united Cyprus.

May God give rest to the heroes who valiantly gave their lives in defence of truth

and honour. May Christ, the Resurrection and Life, grant them peace in His Kingdom and may He also give strength and comfort to those who mourn. May their memories be eternal, and may it be granted to us to receive the blessing of an independent Cyprus during our own days, so that generations to come will have a new anniversary to joyfully celebrate each year.

Wishing you health and the blessing of our Lord Jesus Christ, our living hope, I remain with warm wishes and blessings in the Lord and honour.

London, July 2021

Paternally yours,

+ N I K I T A S Archbishop of Thyateira and Great Britain

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