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Hierarchical Vespers at the celebrating Church of Saint Gerasimos in Sydney



On Wednesday 19 October 2022, a radiant Hierarchical Vespers was celebrated at the celebrating Holy Church of Saint Gerasimos the New Ascetic, in the Sydney suburb of Leichhardt, on the feast of the finding of the Holy Relics of the Saint.

The faithful flooded the church, to honour the memory of the patron saint of their Parish and to welcome their Shepherd, His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia, as well as His Eminence Metropolitan Andreas of Forty Churches and Metropolitan Ieronymos of Larissa and Tyrnavos, who are in Sydney as part of their participation in the First Pan-Australian Clergy Synaxis, the Bishops of the Holy Archdiocese and other priests.

The Festive Vespers were officiated by His Eminence Metropolitan Andreas of Forty Churches, while at the end of the service His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia, after addressing paternal wishes to the congregation, he addressed the visiting Hierarchs with words of praise, thanking them at the same time for their honourable presence at the Pan-Australian Clergy Synaxis and for their participation in the ecclesiastical life of the local Church.

Then, at the request of the Archbishop, Metropolitan Ieronymos of Larissa and Tyrnavos preached the Divine Word, who briefly referred to aspects of the life of Saint Gerasimos, focusing on his familial relationship with Saint Makarios (Notara), Archbishop of Corinth.

As he explained to the faithful, Saint Makarios was the grandson of the brother in the flesh of Saint Gerasimos, and when he went to Kefalonia to venerate and embrace His Holy Relic, a shocking miracle happened: The casket which houses the Holy Relic was opened and Saint Gerasimos got up, embraced Saint Makarios and they had a spiritual conversation, which determined the later life of the latter and especially his course and ministry in the Church.

On the occasion of his reference to the decision of Saint Makarios to resign from the episcopal office and move to Chios, where he dedicated himself to the spiritual

struggle and the support of Hellenism, mainly through his prayers, Metropolitan Ieronymos underlined the important value of prayer in the daily life of every believer. “We often think that if we talk to people about God, we are doing something,” he characteristically observed, but to argue that the most important thing is to talk to God about people.

“A mother may not have the knowledge and the way to talk to her children,” he pointed out, “but if she includes what she wants to tell them in her prayer, then God will respond in the best way, he will put that which she asks for in the souls of children”.

Finally, the Metropolitan of Larissa and Tyrnavos spoke eloquently about the role of Saints in the liturgical life of the Orthodox Church, as well as in the consciences of faithful Christians. He discerned, first of all, that the Saints are the intercessors of people to God. He placed particular emphasis on a second dimension of Their role, which consists of the fact that they proved, with their very lives, that the Gospel is applicable and achievable.

They refuted, therefore, those who maintain that the content of the Gospel refers to other times, distant and foreign to today. “There is no age without testimony that what the Gospel says can be applied”, he underlined and added that every age had and has Saints, that is, people like each of us who imprinted on their lives the evangelical theories and teachings.

At this point, in fact, he pointed out that the Saints of our Church not only confirm the achievable and applicable content of the Gospels, but they are also a signpost for modern Christians, so that they can correctly interpret the Holy Scriptures and not be led astray by heresies.

Besides, all the heresies, as he observed, are based on the Holy Scripture, but having misunderstood and misinterpreted some of its passages and verses, with the result that they lead people astray. “What is correct, through the New Testament, is explained to us by the Fathers of the Church theoretically and the Saints practically”, underlined His Eminence Metropolitan Ieronymos.

A third reason why the Saints of our Church play a significant role in the lives of modern Christians is the fact that they reveal the criteria by which we will all be judged for our entry or not into the Kingdom of Heaven. Metropolitan Ieronymos of Larissa and Tyrnavos, characteristically compared the lives of the Saints to the exam material that students receive in schools, that is, that part of the overall material they have been taught on which they are going to be tested in the final

exams.

Explaining that God will not judge the poor and weak man based on His own qualities and virtues, he pointed out that the judgment of each of us will be compared based on the virtues and works of the Saints of our Church. "So if we want to see how entrance to Heaven is achieved, we have only to read the lives of our Saints and see what is the "examination material". on which we will be judged", Metropolitan Ieronymos concluded and wished the faithful to have God's blessing abundantly in their lives and in their families.





