

Message of Archbishop Makarios of Australia on the anniversary of the 28th October 1940



Today all Greeks, with emotion and pride bow to our heroic ancestors who fought and sacrificed themselves in the defence of their faith and their homeland during the era of the 1940's. We bow down and honour all Greek people, who 82 years ago did not hesitate to stand up against the much stronger conquerors of the homeland. Simultaneously, as befits every anniversary, we try to garner lessons so we move towards the future in a manner worthy of our history.

To this end, let us recall that gloomy period for humanity during which one nation after another faced the advance of the Axis powers. We would concur that the sirens of war found our country in a poor state, its people were afflicted, and its infrastructure inadequate and challenging. We would also ask ourselves, what force gave courage to our ancestors to shout, "OXI" (No!), while other nations – larger, richer and militarily much stronger than Greece – either surrendered without putting up a fight or were crushed within a few days by the rule of fascism and Nazism. What force drove a small people to fight unreservedly in a war so obviously unequal? What power gave them so much strength to put up heroic resistance and become a model of self-sacrifice for the rest of the world?

The answer lies in the ancestral values of our Nation as well as our Orthodox Faith,

which always strengthened our people in difficult times. So, on the one hand, we have patriotism and the commitment to the values of freedom, democracy and human dignity and, on the other, the deep faith in God and the hope that is borne from this in the hearts of the people, which contributed to the unequivocal and resounding “NO” being the only way that our proud ancestors could respond. It was a spontaneous “NO”, which penetrated the hearts and consciences of all – men, women, old people and young, those who fought on the front line, but also all those who remained behind, praying to our Panagia to shelter and protect the country and its young men. That is why today, together with our national anniversary, we also celebrate the feast of the Holy Protection, dedicated to the most holy person of the Mother of God, the person who gives us courage and hope in all the trials of life; personal and collective.

With the certainty that today’s double celebration, apart from being a source of pride is also an occasion for fruitful reflection, I wish Greek women and all Greeks of the fifth continent “many years”, covered by Panagia’s protection and with the courage, hope and values of our Nation and Faith rekindling in their hearts!