

Archbishop Makarios: “The study of Byzantine Music leads to a deeper understanding of God”



“Although for a time, there was the fear of not having enough chanters as our elderly first generation migrants were slowly passing from this present life, we can now look confidently to the future, and thank God for this revival of the art of chanting and eager participation of so many people in the curriculum of the Byzantine Music School of our Archdiocese”.

The above was stated by His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia, clearly moved and having before him the teachers and students of the Melbourne and Northcote branches of the Australian Byzantine Music School. The meeting of the Archbishop with the Byzantine School students in Victoria took place in the context of a modest event for the completion of the School’s academic year, which was hosted at the facilities of the Holy Monastery of Axion Estin in Northcote on Sunday, 4 December.

His Eminence, in the presence of Their Graces, Bishop Kyriakos of Sozopolis and

Evmenios of Kerasounta, addressed warm paternal words to the teachers and students and spoke about the overwhelming pride he feels as he verifies the constant progress of the School that he founded in 2020 with the aim of preserving the sacred tradition of Byzantine music.

He began by saying, "It is encouraging and heartening to see so many people, and young people at that, embark on this journey with enthusiasm and dedication to study and to actively apply themselves to this centuries old tradition." "The study of Byzantine music progressively leads to a deeper understanding of God" he continued and emphasised, "as you chant and articulate the words in the God-inspired hymns written by the saints of our Church, in turn, this understanding of the content offers you the tools to grow and strengthen yourselves spiritually, as you face the daily challenges of an increasingly difficult world and troubled times."

Besides, the Archbishop noted that two of the themes in the hymns of our Orthodox Church, and indeed repeated with great frequency, are God's infinite love and great mercy. "When a person actually identifies deeply within themselves with God's love and His great mercy," he said, "every temptation in our spiritual warfare can be overcome, even the extreme temptation of hopelessness which is so common and prevailing in this modern and materialistic world."

His Eminence also pointed out that, like any art, learning byzantine musical notation develops the virtues of patience, perseverance, hope and courage, while adding that, "as one progresses through the study of chant, they will also slowly become immersed in Orthodox theology, as the hymns are more than simple pious songs."

Concluding, Archbishop Makarios described the School of Byzantine Music as a precious jewel of the Holy Archdiocese of Australia. "Your presence adorns our chanting boxes and uplifts the believers who attend the liturgical services," he emphasised while wholeheartedly thanking the teachers who lead the School in Victoria, as well as all the students, who enthusiastically and lovingly embraced this particular initiative of our local Church. Moreover, he urged them to continue with the same level of enthusiasm, expressing his conviction that their God-pleasing project will inspire and encourage many others to join this beautiful journey of active participation in our Orthodox services.

At the end of His Eminence's moving speech, the Director of the Byzantine Music School in Victoria, Mr Stylianos Andreou, presented him with a commemorative gift and conveyed everyone's gratitude for his guidance, support and tireless paternal care and concern for the School.

It is noted that before the event, the Service of Vespers was held at the Holy Monastery of Axion Estin, which was officiated by Archbishop Makarios and who ordained two Readers; the brothers Constantine and Spyridon Zarkos. His Eminence thanked both for the precious time they have devoted, for many years, to the sacred task of chanting, and urged them to continue this ministry with more zeal and greater devotion, wishing them to have the blessing of God in their lives and in their God-loving projects.