

Archbishop Makarios of Australia: “Forgiveness and fasting, in order to live wholeheartedly the joy of the Resurrection”



Forgiveness and fasting: The two words – a guide for every faithful Christian who wishes to prepare properly during Holy and Great Lent to experience the great event of Christ’s resurrection. In these two words and in their essential content, His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia focused on them, during his inspirational homily at the Holy Cathedral of the Annunciation of Our Lady, in Sydney, where on Cheesefare Sunday afternoon, 26 February 2023, He officiated at the First Lenten Vespers of Great and Holy Lent, known as the Vespers of “forgiveness”.

His Eminence emphasised that “if we are to live the joy of Christ’s resurrection wholeheartedly and experientially, and not as a custom, as a formality or as a practice, then we must hear the voice of the Church, which at this blessed period refers to these two words: forgiveness and fasting. “

Analysing the meaning of the word “forgiveness”, he explained that it literally means “I allow myself and the neighbour to find ourselves in the same place, that is, to co-exist”. His Eminence pointed out that it is not enough to forgive someone in words, but we need to accept our neighbour as part of our lives and as a prerequisite for our salvation. “In the Orthodox Church, unlike other doctrines or religions, we do not walk a road parallel to the neighbour, nor do we run to overcome him, but we are saved through the neighbour,” he said.

Regarding the concept of fasting, the Archbishop clearly clarified that the perception of abstinence, albeit rigorous, from specific foods, is sufficient in and of itself. “There have been many people who fasted in human history who have been lost,” he noted, noting: “First the Pharisees, who fasted exactly as their faith defined, but no one was saved. Because fasting for them was a means of self-confirmation and self-rewarding, it was not a means of approaching God. “

In contrast, real fasting, acceptable by the Orthodox Church and spiritually

beneficial to the faithful, is the fasting of one where one manages to limit his personal desires, weaknesses, passions and bad habits. After quoting some indicative examples of the daily lives of the people of our time, His Eminence urged everyone, if not to eliminate, at least to limit their personal desires and passions during this Holy and Great Lent.

“I’m not absolute, because I know that passions are not easily defeated, but I urge you to at least fight,” he said characteristically and closed with paternal encouragement: “Let’s make an effort to make this a real fast. Not just in food. Let us go a step further ... Let us not rest our consciousness when we turn everything upside down and then begin to fast. “

At the conclusion of the Vespers, observing the ecclesiastical tradition of the day, His Eminence Archbishop Makarios exchanged the embrace of forgiveness with the Hierarchs present: His Grace Bishop Iakovos of Miletoupolis and His Grace Bishop Christodoulos of Magnesia, as well as with the clergy and the faithful.

His Eminence then wished everyone a blessed Lent and a good spiritual struggle during this time.

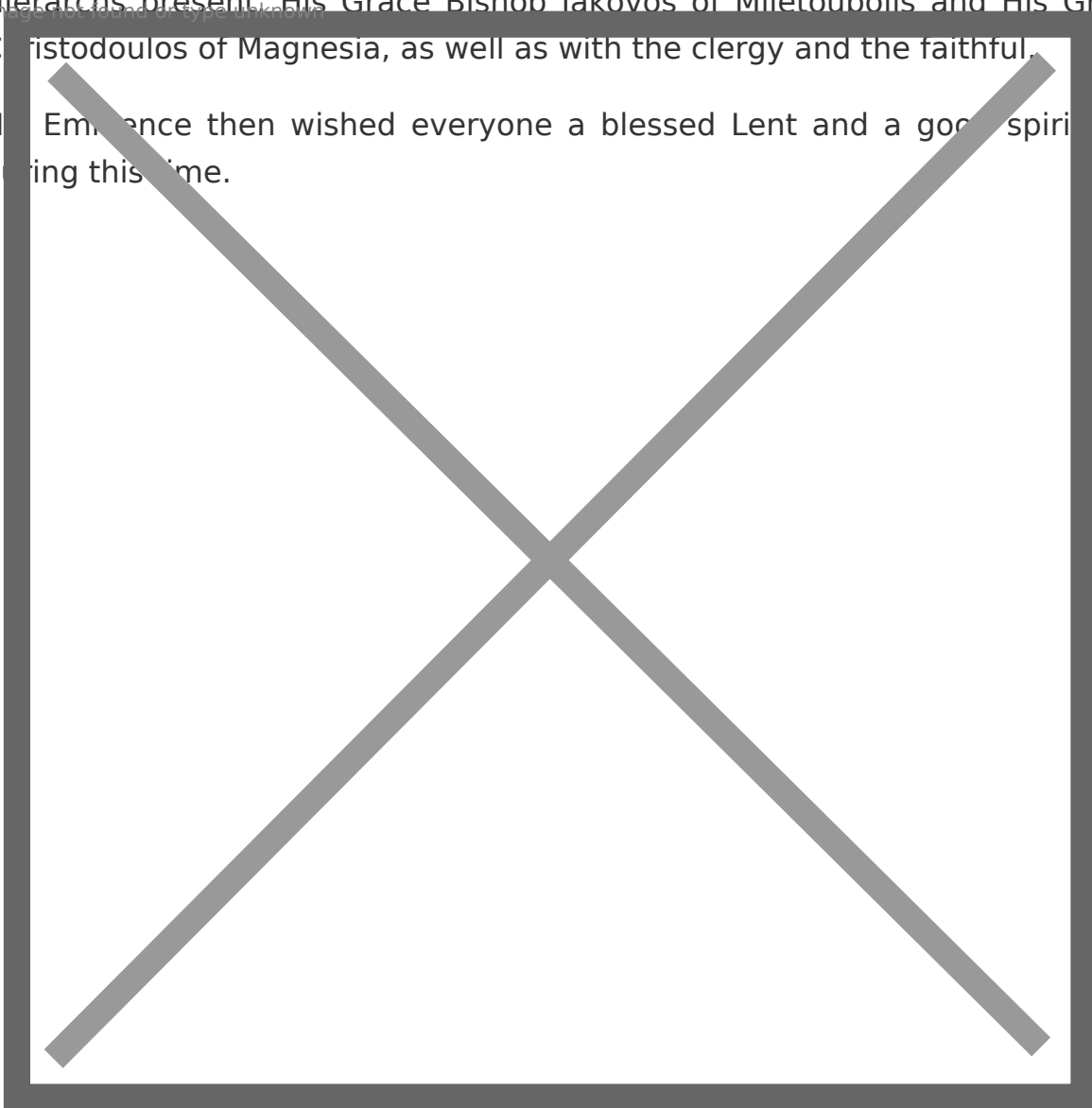










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