

The dynamism of walking together in the Archdiocese of Australia was highlighted by the 12th Clergy-Laity Congress



The 12th Clergy-Laity Congress of the Holy Archdiocese of Australia was crowned with absolute success – a historic event, as it was the first Clergy-Laity Congress convened since 2013 and it was the last one before the completion of a 100 years since the establishment of the Orthodox Church in the fifth continent. The theme of the Congress, which was hosted at St Spyridon College, Sydney, was “Walk Within the Church”. Clergy and laity from all over Australia – more than 650 people in total – assembled for two days on the premises of the Greek Orthodox College where they were informed about, discussed and shared their anxieties, concerns and visions for the future. “They experienced a life of communion”, as His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia stated in his concluding speech on the evening of Tuesday, 26 September.

“Apart from the inspiring and meaningful addresses and reports of the holy hierarchs and all the speakers, which not only gave us food for thought but also opened up avenues and perspectives that we had not perceived, I humbly believe that the most important and crucial was precisely this sense of community and togetherness that we all gained. It is about the inner and heart-felt conviction that

we belong to the Body of Christ, in which we all 'walk' together. After all, this is what is expected and anticipated every time: the co-walking, the 'travailing' in the embrace of the Church", emphasised His Eminence in his introductory remarks of his concluding speech.

Besides, Archbishop Makarios perceptibly discerned that the dynamism of walking together indeed already exists in the Holy Archdiocese of Australia for during the deliberations of the 12th Clergy-Laity Congress, it became evidently apparent through the speeches and the reports and presentations of the institutions and organisations of the local Church. "The entire work that you have heard", he pointed out, "and which is carried out, by the grace of God in our Holy Archdiocese, with the sound cooperation of the bishops, our other clergy and lay brethren, is ecclesial work and not social activism. It serves the building up and unity of the Body of Christ and is not just the fleeting satisfaction of biological, emotional or any other needs of our brethren and of society".

Clearly moved, His Eminence expressed his sincere gratitude to all who contributed to the successful organisation of the 12th Clergy-Laity Congress. Firstly, he thanked the invited hierarchs from abroad for their participation and substantial contribution to the development of a spiritually beneficial dialogue, and specifically: His Eminence Archbishop Nikitas of Thyateira and Great Britain, representative of His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, and Their Eminences, Metropolitans Chrysostomos of Messenia; Athenagoras of Ilion, Acharnes and Petroupolis; Gerasimos of Petra and Cherronesos; and Prodromos of Rethymnos and Avlopotamos. Similarly, fervent thanks were conveyed to the God-loving Bishops of the Holy Archdiocese of Australia – his "co-Cyrenes" as he characterised them – and to his Chancellor, Archimandrite of the Ecumenical Throne, Very Reverend Fr Christophoros Krikelis. Moreover, he gratefully acknowledged all those who contribute in any way, both clergy and lay people, and generally all who work selflessly for the good of Orthodoxy and Hellenism in the fifth continent.

The Archbishop's speech could not fail to mention the revered figure of the Ecumenical Patriarch, who will visit Australia in 2024, the year in which the local Church will celebrate the centenary of its establishment. "Concluding our deliberations, I feel the need", he noted, "to once again thank from the depths of my heart, our All-Holy Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew for his special concern for the Holy Archdiocese of Australia, for his love for us, for his affection and care, for the video message he sent us and, certainly, for sending as his representative a highly valued and illustrious Archbishop". Addressing His Eminence Archbishop Nikitas, he urged him to convey to the Patriarch the gratitude and dedication of the

Christ-loving people of Australia, as well as everyone's anticipation for the official Apostolic visit of His All Holiness to the country, the following year. He concluded his speech with the message: "Your All-Holiness, we are waiting for you in Australia!", which was repeated with a united and lively voice by all the representatives of the 12th Clergy-Laity Congress of the Holy Archdiocese of Australia.

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