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The Ecumenical Patriarchate honoured its founder, Saint Andrew the Apostle



On Thursday, 30 November 2023, in a festive atmosphere, the Ecumenical Patriarchate honoured the memory of its founder, Saint Andrew the First-called Apostle.

On the Feast Day of Saint Andrew the Apostle, a Patriarchal and Poly-Hierarchical Divine Liturgy was officiated by His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, with the participation of the Venerable Hierarchs: Elder Metropolitan Apostolos of Derkoi, Metropolitan Damaskinos of Didymoteicho, Orestiada and Soufli, Metropolitan Naoum of Stromnitsa, Metropolitan Theodoros of Laodicea, Metropolitan Nikandros of Eirinoupolis, Archbishop Evgenios of Crete, Metropolitan Dionysios of Zakynthos and of Strofades, Metropolitan Stefanos of Kallioupolis and Madytos, Metropolitan Ieronymos of Pisidia, Metropolitan Ieronymos of Larissa and Tyrnavos, Metropolitan Prodromos of Rethymno and Avlopotamos, and Metropolitan Platon of Langada, Liti and Rentini.



The Delegation of the Church of Rome also attended the Divine Liturgy.

The following venerable Hierarchs were also present in prayer : Elder Metropolitan Emmanuel of Chalcedon, Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Dodoni, Metropolitan Meliton of Philadelphia, Metropolitan Irinaios of Myriofytos and Peristasis, Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Myra, Archbishop Nikitas of Thyateira and Great Britain, Metropolitan Theoleptos of Iconium, Metropolitan Kyrillos of Krinon, Metropolitan Athenagoras of Kydonia, Metropolitan Maximos of Selyvria, Metropolitan Bartholomew of Smyrna, Metropolitan Kyrillos of Imvros and Tenedos, Metropolitan Andreas of Saranta Ekklesies, and Metropolitan Ioacheim of Bursa. Also, Their Graces: Bishop Adrianos of Halicarnassus, Bishop Kassianos of Aravissos, Bishop Benjamin of Tralee, Bishop Smaragdos of Daphnousia, Bishop Michael of Komana, Bishop Paisios of Xanthoupolis and Bishop Ignatios of Salona.



Also present were the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece, Mr. Georgios Kotsiras, as the representative of the Greek Government; Zetta Makri, Deputy Minister of Education; Mr. Konstantinos Koutras, Ambassador, General Consul of Greece in Constantinople; Mr. Vasil Bodnar, Ambassador of Ukraine to Turkey, accompanied by the Consul General Mr. Roman Nedilskyi; Clergy, Monks, and Nuns; representatives of Christian Communities in Constantinople; Cyril Hortobágyi, the Abbot of the Roman Catholic Pannonhalma Abbey in Hungary; Archons of the Great Church of Christ led by the Secretary General of their Brotherhood “Panagia Pammakaristos,” Mr. Konstantinos Delikostantis; a Leading Educator of the Nation; teachers and students of Greek Schools in Constantinople; and a multitude of faithful individuals from Constantinople, Greece, and Ukraine.

The Holy Sermon was preached by His Eminence Metropolitan Apostolos of New Jersey.

After the dismissal, the Ecumenical Patriarch addressed the official Delegation of the Roman Catholic Church.

“Our hearts are filled with joy as we welcome and greet you once again at the Sacred Centre of Orthodoxy, the venerable See of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in the historic Phanar, on the occasion of the feast of Saint Andrew the First-Called Apostle, the founder and patron of the martyric Church of Constantinople.

We sincerely thank our beloved brother, His Holiness Pope Francis of Rome, who appointed and sent you as his representatives and bearers of his esteemed festive message. The established blessed tradition of exchange of delegations during the Thronal Feasts of our Churches, initiated by our predecessors, Pope Paul VI and Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras, allows us once again to exclaim with the Psalmist: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1)."

The Ecumenical Patriarch mentioned that the past year was marked by two significant events for the relationship between the two sister Churches, Orthodox and Roman Catholic, regarding their common interest in synodality and the primacy issue.

The first, as he stated, was the 15th Plenary Session of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the two Churches, held in Alexandria last June. The second was the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church, which convened in Rome last October.

After referring to what was discussed at the aforementioned events, the Ecumenical Patriarchate noted that unity, "which we seek and for which we have worked zealously for more than half a century, is not a luxury," emphasising the importance and value of sincere dialogue. "Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ prayed shortly before His all-saving Passion: "That they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me." (John 17:21).

This unity becomes a more urgent need in the current context of a more and more secularised world, torn apart by various destructive ideologies and controversies. We are particularly pleased that with His Holiness Pope Francis of Rome, we have common positions on contemporary burning issues.

We both fight for respect for human rights, peace, reconciliation, and solidarity. Human suffering, the trials of refugees, the violence of war, and above all the suffering of civilians and children, shock us. We believe in sincere dialogue and its power as the most appropriate means of resolving disputes between peoples and states.

We are convinced that the pacification and cooperation of religions contribute greatly to world peace and that religious fundamentalism is a serious obstacle to this path. Our common efforts bear fruit in environmental protection, where the contribution of the Christian Churches and interreligious cooperation has a

remarkable resonance.

All these parallel initiatives alongside the official theological dialogue between the two Churches, as well as face-to-face meetings, not only support this dialogue but also demonstrate the power of Christian witness in the world. They reveal our common traditions, which embody and express fidelity to the inseparable unity of the two commandments of love for God and love for neighbour, as the Lord said: “On these two commandments dependeth the whole law and the prophets.” (Matthew 22:40)”



The Ecumenical Patriarch asked Cardinal Koch to convey to His Holiness Pope Francis, “the personal wishes along with our prayers to the Lord, as He preserves Him in health, to continue His high ministry.”

Subsequently, Cardinal Kurt Koch read a warm fraternal message from His Holiness Pope Francis of Rome.



Immediately afterwards, in the courtyard of the Patriarchate, the Ecumenical Patriarch met and blessed a group of Ukrainian clergy and believers who traveled from their long-suffering homeland to be present on this day on the feast of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.



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Photos: Nikos Papachristou / Ecumenical Patriarchate

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