

## **Northcote: End of year Christmas Concert of the Byzantine Music School of Victoria**



On Saturday afternoon, 16 December 2023, at the Archdiocesan Church of Our Lady 'Axion Esti', in Northcote, Melbourne, the end of year Christmas Concert of the Byzantine Music School of the Holy Archdiocese of Australia in Victoria, took place, where the students and their teachers presented various hymns, with an emphasis on those connected with the feast day of Christmas.

His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia was represented at the concert by His Grace Bishop Evmenios of Kerasounta, Archiepiscopal Vicar of Northcote, while Metropolitan Ezekiel of Dervis was also in attendance.

It is noted that this year marks four years since the establishment of the Byzantine Music School of Australia, and therefore the first graduates of the School also participated in the event.

At the opening of the Christmas concert, which began with the Vespers service and was followed by the presentation of the hymns, His Grace Bishop Evmenios offered an address to the congregation, on behalf of His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia.

In his address, Bishop Evmenios emphasised the spiritual value of Byzantine music and the sacred art of chanting. He recalled, among other things, a relevant quote of His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia, that in Byzantine psalmody “we don’t just find notes and words, but we embark on a sacred odyssey that unites us with the divine. It is a harmony that echoes the devotion of our ancestors, leading us to a spiritual elevation.”

His Grace Bishop Evmenios of Kerasounta pointed out that the establishment of the Byzantine Music School of the Holy Archdiocese of Australia was one of the first actions of Archbishop Makarios, after his enthronement in 2019. “Recognising the value of Byzantine music, the Archbishop envisioned the cultivation of not only musicians with certification of a four-year course, but to become stewards of a lifelong journey in prayer and spiritual edification,” he observed. “The Byzantine Music School acts as a beacon,” he added, “transmitting not only musical skills, but a deeper understanding of the sacred melodies that connect heaven and earth.”

Also emphasising the timelessness of the value of Byzantine music, His Grace likened it to an anchor that keeps us close to the eternal truths of our faith in a complex modern world. Another quote of His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia was mentioned, emphasising that “Byzantine music is not a relic of the past, but is a living tradition that speaks to the challenges of today’s reality”. “In the face of the uncertainties of our times, Byzantine music is a source of stability and continuity, reminding us of the unchanging nature of God,” added Bishop Evmenios.

Concluding, His Grace Bishop Evmenios thanked the teachers of the Byzantine Music School of Victoria for their dedication and hard work, as well as the students of the School, for their tireless efforts to preserve and share this sacred tradition. His Grace referred to Saint Dionysios of Zakynthos, and urged those present to follow his example, one of forgiveness and liberation from grudges and bitterness. Finally, in light of the approaching celebration of the Nativity of the God-man, Our



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