

Tribute to His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia on the occasion of His Patronal Feast Day



By Father Christophoros Krikelis
Archimandrite of the Ecumenical Throne
Chancellor of the Holy Archdiocese of Australia

Celebrating today the feast day of that great ascetic saint of the desert, St Makarios the Great, whose fervent and unfluctuating desire, during his life here on earth in the fourth century, was none other than to experience the incomprehensible blessedness of Christ, we take this opportunity, on behalf of all the faithful of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia, to express our wholehearted wishes with one united voice, to our much revered Archbishop, Chief Shepherd and Spiritual Father, for the continued abundance of our Lord's blessings from on high, on the occasion of his patronal feast day. Moreover, we express our joy and gladness, but also our gratitude for such a consummate and tremendous gift of God's grace bestowed upon the Orthodox Church here in the Antipodes.

At the helm of the Church here in Australia for nearly five years, our Archbishop's leadership has been one principally concerned to advance and further consolidate

the unity of the Orthodox Church in a correct and canonical manner. Indeed, as a Hierarch of the Ecumenical Throne, His Archiepiscopal tenure could easily be characterised as one profusely marked by a profound and pre-eminent sense of responsibility to give witness to and to “speak the truth in love”, something for which he has had to suffer, on many occasions, the criticism and the censure of the people. And yet, in matters regarding the ‘well-being’ of Church, His Eminence has always remained resolute yet receptive, compelling yet compassionate, tenacious yet thoughtful, for his all-prevailing desire for all the faithful to “grow up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ” (Eph 4:15).

During the year ahead, one which will be marked by the centenary anniversary since the establishment of the Greek Orthodox Church by the venerable Ecumenical Patriarchate in 1924, we feel not only especially blessed, but also deeply grateful that our loving God, has granted it so, in His continued and overarching providence for his people here in the Antipodes, that His Eminence Archbishop Makarios will be at the forefront of all these commemorative celebrations, which will culminate with the apostolic visit of His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople to Australia in October of this year. Our Archbishop’s utmost dedication and devotion to the Ecumenical Throne—not to mention his enormous admiration to this God-given institution—to which He so aptly refers to as the ‘pre-eminent but also suffering Church’ [Ἐκκλησία Ἄρχουσα καὶ Πάσχουσα]—the title of his most recent publication—is truly beyond compare and even without parallel. History will undoubtedly show him to be a Hierarch who truly brought and decisively engrafted the ‘spirit’ and ‘phronema’ of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, to Australia, something which, for those of us who have received a special blessing to work by his side on a daily basis, already discern and enjoy in the here and now.

Characterised by a heart wide open for all people and a clear vision for the future of the Church—like that of His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew in the Phanar—His Eminence has especially focused his attention to those who, finding themselves outside of the Church’s embrace, were for decades left neglected and even disregarded. Knowing full well that frank and loving dialogue for the restoration of the unity of God’s people is a fundamental response to Christ’s inviolable command “that they all may be one” (John 17:21), he has fearlessly pioneered forward to meet this challenge —knowing full well that he would be criticised—wanting to see the reunification and reconciliation of the Greek Orthodox faithful in Australia as one united body in the next centenary chapter of the Church’s history. The fruits of such endeavours, brought about by his resolute initiatives and desire for unity—notwithstanding sustained and hurtful slurs he has

had to bear—are clearly evident already five years into his Archiepiscopal ministry.

If the first Orthodox Hierarchy of Australia, namely, Metropolitan Christophoros (Knites) had a far-reaching vision for the establishment and consecration of Orthodox Churches belonging to the Ecumenical Throne throughout our entire Nation—it is not without significance that one of his publications included the translation into English of the service of the Consecration of an Orthodox Church, an unprecedented work for its time and a most important legacy for future generations—it is His Eminence today who, in the very same spirit, is realising this original dream by consecrating our Churches throughout all of Australia, in this way, indelibly sealing the presence of the Ecumenical Patriarchate for our salvation and unity with Christ within the Church, which is His Body.

Beyond his ardent desire to unite the Greek Orthodox faithful more intimately with one another, the Church and the Ecumenical Patriarchate more broadly, he has played a leading role on a more global stage, always guided by the luminous and loving Light issuing forth from the Phanar (a word, which in Greek literally means ‘lighthouse’, namely a beacon of light) towards the entire oikoumene—namely, with warmth and fervour, with concern and compassion, with nobility and humility—in assisting the Ecumenical Throne to find ways which would allow the faithful of Ukraine their rightful place within the family of Orthodox Churches, something which has been achieved, not without much pain and toil. And yet, convinced with heart, mind and soul, that the “priestly ethos” (a title of another work) is one marked by a sense of pastoral solicitude and a loving predisposition for all people, and especially towards the trodden and stricken, the faithful in Ukraine were rightfully recognised and received as genuine children under the Omophorion of the Ecumenical Throne. And with that same resoluteness, he has sought to secure the rightful status of Ukrainian Orthodox faithful here within Australia, the fruits of which we are already enjoying.

For this and so much more, we pray that our loving and compassionate God may continue to grant our gracious Father, and Shepherd in Christ many blessed years in his pre-eminent yet suffering ministry of Archiepiscopal oversight; we ask that our Archbishop and Father in Christ may be given the Gracious strength of our Lord so that he may continue his difficult yet sacred ministry so that we, the faithful, may be in a position to advance forward into the next and exciting chapter of the Church life here in Australia, with oneness of mind, heart and soul.

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