

Mount Athos, 30th May, 2020

To
Their Graces, the Hierarch of
The Holy Archdiocese of Australia
(Through His Eminence
Archbishop Makarios of Australia
In Sydney

Your most God-loving Graces,

Living in the period after the feast day of Pentecost and chanting with joy and thanksgiving the rich and benevolent actions of the Paraclete to all the world, we humbly pray that the light-filled grace of the Paraclete may shine within Your hearts and that His all-powerful strength may be with you in Your arduous and exhausting ministry for the restoration of the much pained and chosen Orthodox flock in the Fifth Continent.

Some time ago, we received Your correspondence, with protocol number 750/28.3.2020, addressed to the Holy Community of Mount Athos, “expressing objection to the incongruous and anticanonical behaviour of Fr Damaskinos from the Cell of St George ‘the Philadelphos’”, which was also sent to us. Your letter arrived late, but the heavily laden periods of Great Lent and Holy Pascha, together with the effects of the pandemic, did not allow us to respond sooner.

We read your letter very carefully and noted Your pain, and we, the undersigned of this letter, were deeply saddened to see that, during this time of spiritual joy, enthusiasm and Your sacred pastoral duties, accusations, publications and disturbing voices—and indeed coming from Mount Athos—wanted to sully Your Church, certain people and her work, and to create doubts, divisions and disturbances within the people and her spiritual leadership.

Some Hieromonks and Monks from various Monastic Brotherhoods, who have signed this letter have served, and continue to serve Your flock, at the request of the Holy Archdiocese of Australia, with self-sacrifice night and day, and they give witness to the tireless care and the worthwhile ministry to the faithful, by the Hierarchs and Priests, and especially by the Archbishop, both in matters pertaining to the Faith and Nation. Moreover, they speak with affection that the seed of the word has fallen and continues to fall onto the fertile soil of the souls of the faithful. From the time of the ever-remembered

Archbishop Stylianos to this day, with your good Shepherd, Archbishop Makarios, our fathers maintain written correspondence with Your children, many of whom were captivated by the monastic mode of life and already adorn the Garden of Panagia as Monks and reflect the ethos and Your fruitful pastoral ministry.

We are duty bound to assure You that whatever was written against You, indiscriminately and imprudently—beyond the fact that they are simply the individual opinions of the one who sent these, and betray a lack of pastoral responsibility and prudence for ecclesiastical matters and the spiritual protection of the people—does not express the spirit and the tradition of the Holy Mountain. The holy saints and fathers of Mount Athos were called, and continue to be called, to convey hope and peace; they serve with attention the unity of the Church and inspire askesis and prayer, not scandals and disquiet. Certainly, during difficult times, the Fathers of Mount Athos have expressed their opinion on matters relating to faith, or other significant issues where its representatives were invited; it is concerned to cultivate within the faithful respect to the recognised Hierarchs and to collaborate with them. Characteristic is the excerpt from St Gregory Palamas who says that, “each of the incumbent Hierarchs comes in order to bring to the flock the grace and the gifts of God, and the illumination of Holy Spirit through the Gospel. Those who reject any one of them, cut the transmission of the grace of God and bring division to divine succession. They are separated from God and hand themselves over to the corrupt apostasy of every kind of tribulation.”

On the contrary, we want to assist in Your God-loving work that looks towards the ultimate aim of the Church—which is the sanctification and salvation of the faithful. It is significant that You continue unaffected, “to fulfil Your ministry”, with a peaceful conscience, with fear of God and with obedience to the holy Church; to work in the Vineyard of the Lord, for the glory of His Name and the strengthening of the faith, with the firm conviction that the Lord, who is a Just Judge and who befittingly rewards, will recognise Your toil, patience, peace and sacrifices. Already, Your love, defence and Your respect towards your Archbishop and Father, honour You, because You always had sentiments of love towards Your Father.

In this way, we believe that the common path that You embark upon your new Archbishop Makarios—for whom the monastic life has been well-known to him from childhood, and who was unanimously elected by His All-Holiness and the Mother Church as a beacon of light for the Church in Australia—will continue to create well-founded hopes for a fruitful and sanctifying ministry; works which will contribute towards a salvific course, for the joy and benefit of the *pleroma* of the Church and the pride and justification of the Mother Church.

Finally, we convey to all the protection and the blessing of the Theotokos, the Protector of our Holy place, and we pray for every blessing from the all-gracious and rewarding God, illumination and strength; and we respectfully ask for Your supportive prayers and blessings.

With deepest respect and love in the Lord:

Abbots of the Holy Monasteries of Holy Mountain:

Abbot of Vatopedi

Abbot of Dionysiou

Abbot of Pantocratoros

Abbot of Simonopetra

Abbot of Stavronikita

Abbot of Xenophontos