

Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain

Greeting of Patr. Bartholomew on the celebrations of the Three Hierarchs

GREETING OF HIS ALL HOLINESS

THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH VARTHOLOMAIOS

ON THE OCCASION OF THE CELEBRATIONS

ORGANIZED BY THE ARCHDIOCESE OF

THYATEIRA AND GREAT BRITAIN

COMMEMORATING THE THREE HIERARCHS

Your Eminence, Archbishop Gregorios of Thyateira and Great Britain,

Your Graces, brothers in Christ,

Learned educators

Beloved Children in the Lord,

'What is the treasure? To bring up (those children) in the education and guidance of the Lord. In this way indeed the good treasure and acquired by its owner, no thief can touch, nor lice pervert, nor the temporary wealth of this world, human organization, concern or war' (Basil the Great, Speech on Chastity 68-69).

This is the Feast of the three greatest stars of the Triune God and protectors of the letters and education, and Mother Church is partaking in this common celebration of the sacred hierarchs, Basil the Great to whom the heavens were revealed, Archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, together with his commonly-descended close friend, Gregory the Theologian and the other, adorning the widely-renowned throne of the queen of the cities, the golden-spoken saint John, whose remains have for years now been deposited in our sacred Patriarchal Church of the Trophy-bearer and Great Martyr St George.

But Mother Church does not only honour the three as shepherds and teachers of the Church, as secret trumpets of the Spirit and as all-golden mouths of the Word, as our leaders in our Faith and educators in Christ, but also as the protectors of education and letters. On the occasion of this feast, we are paying tribute to our great benefactors and teachers, to whom we are expressing our deepest gratitude, because they have bequeathed famous educational institutions of our devout Race, first among those the historical Great Patriarchal School of the Race, which overlooks not only the hill of Phanarion but also the history of our letters and education, followed by the rest of the educational foundations of the Diaspora across the globe, which, despite the adversities they are facing, are patiently and perseveringly continuing their work, gazing upon the future of education with optimism.

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They comprise truly our treasure, since, as Basil the Great, one of the three celebrated Hierarchs assures us in the quotation that precedes this greeting, 'bringing up children in the education and guidance of the Lord' comprises the good treasure, which having been acquired by the owner, 'no thief can touch, nor lice pervert' and neither does it comprise a temporary holding of the wealth of the world but a permanent possession that will forever enrich those that guard and preserve it, as well as those struggling for its increase and dissemination, along with those working in pain and sacrifice to feed their children spiritually, the male and female students, the hatchlings of the Race 'in education and guidance of the Lord', that is, under the spirit of the three greatest hierarchs.

This type of education, which combines the knowledge of the world along with the cultivation of the character and the personality of the young people and their inculcation with moral values and virtues, is indeed a treasure, a treasure that will remain, and which 'no thief will ever touch, not lice pervert', contrary to the other treasures, that get corrupted and stolen and perverted and disappear, to the great disappointment of their holders.

The permanence and value of the treasure of education and the parallel Christian edification of the youth, as the highest hierarchs and teachers of the world taught, creates common ground amongst all of us, looking back at the development and edification of our devout race through the clashing stones of History. And it is indeed admirable that despite the repeated efforts of many across the centuries to usurp our wealth and raze the treasures of our fathers, there was only one thing that they all failed at, to usurp and deprive us of the treasure of education, which we keep and preserve as the pupil of our eye, in the treasuries of knowledge and virtue, in the temples of the muses and the workshops of the souls. We keep this treasure not as a dead object or as a museum piece to be exhibited as a relic of a glorious past, but as a life-giving component which continues to send forth new branches and blossoms and yield sweet and tasty crops that will please all of our hearts.

For this reason, we wish to express our joy for the work achieved in the educational institutions of the Diaspora there and grant our just Patriarchal praise to all struggling and working to maintain a high quality level and the progress of the students, male and female, studying therein.

Under the inspired guidance of your beloved Eminence, dear brother in Christ and Archbishop of Thyateira and Great Britain, and in seamless cooperation with their school committees of the various Communities, a new scope and perspective has opened up for our schools during the last years. Honouring the three great Hierarchs and protectors of our education, we extend our heartfelt wish to continue to keep and preserve in our shell-made vessels this precious treasure of the Greek and Christian education, that has taught the world and transmit this to every person, by means of the local educational institutions and through the efforts of the officers working therein under the auspices and blessing of the Great Sacred Church of Christ and its local Hierarchs, who are following the example of the protectors of our letters, the three Hierarchs, whose wishes, blessings and intercessions may strengthen all the teachers and the students, as well as those working and struggling in our educational institutions for the sake of education and those that seek it.

Phanarion, 1 February 2017

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Vartholomaios of Constantinople

Fervent intercessor to God for all of you