

EVENT AT ZION SCHOOL FOR THE INTERNATIONAL CELEBRATION OF WORLD GREEK LANGUAGE DAY

On the evening of Thursday, January 27/February 9, 2023, an event was organized in the hall of ceremonies of the Holy Zion Seminar School of the Patriarchate in honour of the Greek Language Day which has been established in recent years.

This event was organized with the cooperation of the Greek Consulate General in Jerusalem and the Dragoman of the Patriarchate and School Managing Director, Archimandrite Mattheos. The event was presented by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem, Mr Evangelos Vlioras, with the following preface:

“They gave me Greek as my language, the poor house on the sandy beaches of Homer. My only concern is my language on the sandy beaches of Homer...”

Your Excellency,

Dear Fathers,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Greek language holds the precious and rare privilege of belonging to only 5 languages, out of the 6,500 official languages spoken today, which demonstrate an uninterrupted presence of 4,000 years of oral and written existence in the history of the human race. Notable is the fact that up to 5 centuries ago the Greek language was also an international language of communication.

But language is not just a tool for communication and transmission of information. It is a carrier of culture and historical memory. Within the linguistic shapes and forms that

sometimes become oral narration, sometimes written testimony, poetry, essay or song, are hidden the anxieties, the desires, the joys, the values and the history of a people who, according to our great poet Odysseus Elytis, has the privilege to call the sky “heaven” and the sea “sea”, as Homer and Plato called it two and a half thousand years ago.

So we speak a language that only a few million people speak for two and a half thousand years without interruption and with minimal changes. This fact captures the peculiar dimension of our country, which, according to Elytis, is “small in terms of space and vast in terms of time” and confirms the saying of the linguist Yiannis Psycharis, that “language and homeland are the same”. At the same time, the Greek language, as the language of the Gospels, makes the Greek language, and by extension Hellenism, a universal and timeless point of reference. In recent years, our national poet Dionysios Solomos highlighted the values of Hellenism as a universal cause, having nothing else in mind “beyond freedom and language”. This universal dimension of the Greek spirit, as spread through the Greek language, is reminded and honoured by the establishment of the Greek State on February 9, the day of commemoration of Dionysios Solomos, as the International Day of the Greek Language.

Highlighting, promoting, and strengthening the learning and dissemination of the Greek language abroad are top priorities for the Greek State, not only because the language is a connecting link between the motherland and the diaspora, but also because the language, like Hellenism, is a living, dynamic and constantly evolving element. It constantly renews itself, adapts to changing conditions and assimilates new influences. Thus, the Greek language is the thread that holds us and brings us from the world of myth to the world of artificial intelligence and the internet.

As stated by the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Katsaniotis, in his message for the International Day of the

Greek Language: “From the ‘golden Mycenae’ and Linear B”, the speech of Homer and the great Tragedians, until today, in the age of information, digital technology and social media, the Greek language is alive and active, producing history, culture and science”.

We can only grasp the thread and continue the course with a deep awareness of the responsibility imposed on us by our centuries-old linguistic tradition and history.

On this occasion, I would like to express special thanks to Professor Mr Nikos Michaelidis for the keynote speech of the event, H.H.B. the Patriarch of Jerusalem for His blessing for the event to be held at the Patriarchal school of Holy Zion, and of course the Managing Director of the School, Fr Mattheos, the children and the teachers and all those who worked for today’s event.

Finally, I would like to thank all of you for your presence at the event tonight.”

The main speaker on the subject of the Greek language was the anthropologist professor Mr Nikolaos Michaelidis of the University of Missouri, USA, with his lecture to be posted shortly.

Among the guests were; the representative of H.H.B. the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos Geronda Secretary-General, His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the French Consul in Jerusalem Mr René Troccaz and the Ambassador of the Republic of Cyprus in Ramallah Mr Assos, members of the Greek Consulate and the Greek Parish of Jerusalem and the Arab-speaking flock, teachers and students.

From Secretariat-General