



Opening of the Law Term Service in NSW

Service conducted by Archbishop Stylianos at the Cathedral of the Annunciation of our Lady



Left: His Eminence Archbishop Stylianos conducted the Service for the Opening of the Law Term 2012 in NSW, at the Cathedral of the 'Annunciation of our Lady'.
Right: Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of NSW Tom Bathurst, His Eminence Archbishop Stylianos, His Grace Bishop Irinej and His Grace Bishop Seraphim and Judges during their entry to the Cathedral.

On Tuesday 7 February 2012, at the Cathedral of the 'Annunciation of our Lady', His Eminence Archbishop Stylianos conducted the Service for the Opening of the Law Term 2012 in NSW.

Dignitaries present were His Grace Bishop Seraphim of Apollonias, the Hon Tom Bathurst, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of NSW, His Grace Bishop Irinej, Bishop of Australia and N. Zealand for the Serbian Orthodox Church. Judges present from the Supreme Court were Justice Campbell, Justice Young, Justice Whealy, Justice White, Justice Rothman and Justice Ward. From the Federal Court: Justice Arthur Emmett, Registrar Stephanie Kavallaris, Deputy District Registrar and Registrar Anthony Tesoriero. From the Land and Environment Court Justice Sheahan and Justice Craig. From the District Court Justice Blanch. From the Local Court, Justice Henson, Chief Magistrate of the Local Court of NSW and Magistrate Tsavdaridis.

Also present were Mrs Theodora Toumanidou-Tolios, Vice Consul, representing the Consul General of Greece in Sydney, Mr Brabko Radošević, Consul General of the Republic of Serbia, Mr Justin Dowd, President of the Law Society of NSW, Ms Chrissa Loukas representing Mr Bernard Coles QC, President of the NSW Bar Association, Mr Jack Passaris, Hon. President of the Ethnic Communities Council of NSW, and many others.

In his address, delivered in the Cathedral of the Annunciation of the Theotokos His Eminence Archbishop Stylianos stated the following:

Your Honour, the Chief Justice,
other distinguished Justices,
Judges, Members of the Judiciary
and various Servants of the Law Profession,
Reverend Clergy, sisters and brothers,

Over the many years that we have been gathering at this Cathedral to pray in common for the commencement of the annual Law Term, we have had the opportunity to verify the value of human Justice, as a factor of balance and stability, as well as the relationship of human Justice in comparison to the Divine Justice of Revelation.

Today we have the exceptional pleasure and privilege to welcome in our midst the New Chief Justice of New South Wales, His Excellency Thomas Frederick Bathurst.

In honour, therefore, of our New Chief Justice, we shall briefly examine today the relationship between

Faith and Law as expounded by the Apostle Paul in his Letter to the Galatians.

We heard just a few moments ago the relative reading (Gal. 3:23-29) and on this extract we shall focus our attention.

In the first instance we must observe the importance which the factor of **time** has in Revelation generally, particularly when we refer to the Apostle Paul for whom the three dimensions of time (past-present-future) are of decisive importance for salvation.

The personal quest of Paul to live the Mosaic Law as an absolute value, led him to a blind ritualism which sanctioned him to develop into a fanatical persecutor of the Christian Church, as he himself confessed later with extreme humility and sincerity. However, this sincerity and confession in humility would only occur through the intervention of his entirely supernatural call from God, which transformed him into the most ardent preacher of Faith in Christ.

Following this transformation, Paul was now in a position to judge the Law, no longer negatively, but to appreciate it as an indispensable exercise in the obedience of Faith.

He was thus able to declare to the Galatians, whom he had systematically catechized in the Gospel of Christ, that

*"Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed.
So the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ that we might be justified by faith."*

This notion of the Law as a "tutor bringing us to Christ" encompasses the entire Judaic tradition relating to the coming of the Messiah, including all the "pre-figurations" and "predictions" of the Old Testament which "at many times and in various ways" (Heb. 1:1) foretold, for the chosen people of God, the specific attributes of the coming Saviour. Precisely, therefore, because the attributes in mention were given in a language "which unfolds into light", in order to distinguish the chosen people and to protect them from idolatrous influences, Paul uses the term "locked up".

The uniqueness, however, and the truly salvific power of the Law, guiding the children of God protectively towards complete liberation, is expressed through an almost "dialectic" manner in the very "abolition" of the

Law itself, which no one could possibly declare more radically than Paul. Only he, as one "who was set apart from his mother's womb" (Gal. 1:15) for the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ, was in a position to declare categorically that

*"after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor,
for you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus".*

Through this categorical declaration, we see that the Apostle of the Nations preaches the absolute equality of all the children of God, since their faith is "in Christ Jesus". He does not, however, speak about the equality alone of all "in Christ Jesus", but proceeds even further. He stresses that, through baptism in Christ, the believers do not become merely followers and disciples of Christ, but are deemed worthy to be clothed with Christ Himself as a brilliant robe of immortality: "As many of you as have been baptized in Christ, have been clothed with Christ".

This ascent of Christians, being led upward from equality amongst themselves to a mysterious transformation through their "Christification", had, as the next level, the complete identification of all, in one person.

Here, indeed, we hear the abolition of all possible distinctions through one singular person in Christ Jesus, in the name of their identification: "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus".

Following the described ascent - as a natural climax and a conclusion simultaneously - the concise and affirmative confession of Paul is posed: "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise".

Thus, through the Epistle of St Paul to the Galatians, we see abundantly manifested the singularity and indivisibility of the Judeo-Christian Tradition, the general Culture of which remains the predominant moral and social dynamic in Australia as well, despite the recent demographic changes in the population of this blessed Land, through increased immigration from countries such as China and India.

In concluding, I would like to extend our warmest wishes, not only to our new Chief Justice, but also to the entire Judiciary and all members of the legal profession, for a truly blessed Law Term.

May God bless us all. Amen.