



**Official inauguration of the Museum  
of the Metropolitan Cathedral of Athens**

**Sunday 19 January 2020**

**SNF Remarks, Ambassador Vassilis Kaskarelis,  
Senior Advisor to the BoD**

Mr. President,

Your Beatitude,

On behalf of the Board of Directors and all our colleagues at the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF), I would like to express our joy for being here with you today, participating in this special ceremony for the inauguration of the Museum of the Metropolitan Cathedral of Athens, in the highly honored presence of the President of the Hellenic Republic and the Archbishop of Athens and All Greece.

The inauguration of the Metropolitan Cathedral of Athens in 1862 marked a milestone in the history of the modern Greek state. Today, it opens a part of the church to the public—both to the people of Greece and visitors from all over the world—that was underutilized for many years, presenting a wealth of extremely important religious and historical artifacts. The first time we visited the space, a few years ago, we envisioned its transformation into a modern Museum, complete, functional, and evocative, a place of contemplation, but also of religious and historical research. We believed in its creation and decided to support it.

To be precise, our reasons for moving forward with the SNF grant are the following:

- The unquestionable importance of the Metropolitan Cathedral of Athens for Greek Orthodoxy, for Greece, and for its citizens
- The priceless value of the Cathedral's relic collection
- And, of course, the person who inspired the work, who, with Your own Blessings Your Beatitude, conceived the idea of the Relic Treasury, and who is distinguished for his integrity, spirituality, perseverance, and attention to detail.

Mr. President,

Your Beatitude,

This man is none other than Archpriest Father Thomas, with whom we have a long-standing relationship of mutual appreciation and cooperation, and who has repeatedly assisted the Foundation in grants and issues related to the church and of a broader

religious nature. It is worth noting that, among other things, ten years ago, we also worked together to create and complete the Ecclesiastical Museum of Amorgos. And this important idea is one of the projects that he has undertaken and performed quietly, with humility and selflessness.

In this context, I would like to point out that the Co-President of the SNF, Andreas Dracopoulos, regrets that he was unable to attend tonight's ceremony due to his obligations abroad. However, during a recent visit to Athens, he had the opportunity to be guided through the Museum by our exquisite and long-time—if you would allow me to use the word—friend, Father Thomas, and was stunned by the beauty and historical significance of the space.

Throughout our journey since the Foundation's inception in 1996, having made thousands of grants to nonprofit organizations around the world, we have realized that, no matter how ambitious an endeavor may be, it cannot be realized without the involvement of effective and dedicated people. And, at the end of the day, when we refer to grants, we are not talking about impersonal sums and numbers, but about people who want to produce work, quietly contributing to their fellow human beings, without hesitation or second thoughts.

All of us at the Foundation feel very fortunate that the people will be able to visit and get to know the Cathedral's Museum, in the heart of Athens, whose current layout—resembling an exquisite piece of embroidery—highlights the exquisite works of art included in the collection.

Thank you very much.

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