

02/02/2024

Greeting By Archbishop Elpidophoros of America At the Hellenic College/Holy Cross Agiasmos & Vasilopita



President Katos,

Your Grace, Bishop Joachim of Amissos,

Beloved Deans, Faculty, Clergy, Administration and Students,

Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

There is something very auspicious about the timing of the celebration of our community Agiasmos and Vasilopita today. We commence this New Year of 2024 with a new president at the helm of our precious School. I ask all of us here present, to offer a silent prayer for President Katos' good strength and success, as he takes hold of the rudder of this most important Institution of our Sacred Archdiocese. He inherits smoother waters than his predecessor did – our beloved friend, George Cantonis – but there is still much to navigate in order to bring Hellenic College and Holy Cross into safe harbor.

The other auspicious aspect of our blessings today is that we are entering on the eve of our Lord's Presentation in the Temple of the Law tomorrow. This magnificent and joyous feast is the revelation of the Prophecy of Malachi:

The Lord Whom you seek will suddenly come to His Temple; the Messenger of the Covenant in Whom you delight, behold, He is coming, says the Lord of Hosts.*

And what is the Message of His Covenant with us? As the Lord said on the night in which He gave Himself up for the life of the world:

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to myself, so that where I am, you may also be.†

Here, in the feast of Ὑπαπαντή, is the foreshadowing not only of the Lord's Ascension to the Throne of God, but our passage as well, as Hebrews says:

by a new and living way, which [the Lord Jesus] has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh. †

The Divine Child, a mere forty days, is received by the one Ancient, in anticipation of His glorious Ascension to the Eternal Kingdom of His Heavenly Father, Who is more Ancient than can ever be conceived!

The wonderful Feast of the Presentation collapses time itself as we noetically enter the Temple not-made-with-hands – Ἀχειροποίητο. As we worship, we enter the time beyond time – neither past, present or future; but the Eternal Now. These spiritual realities are ever-present with us, whether we possess any awareness of them or not.

But thanks be to God, we who are Orthodox Christians have a liturgical calendar that always hearkens to them and call us to them.

Therefore, we commence today with hopefulness and fruitful expectation. We consecrate our year to the Lord – whether it is the calendar year, or the semester that leads to graduation and advancement.

We bless the crown of the year with Holy Water – whose sanctification comes through the Cross, as it plunges into this source of physical life to be transmuted into a fountain of life, as the Psalmist sings:

Ὅτι παρὰ σοὶ πηγὴ ζωῆς.... §

I pray that this New Year of 2024 will be a source of life to all the members of this precious community of Hellenic College and Holy Cross. And may your optimism and spiritual vitality be nourished by the blessed Vasilopita, enough to sustain you in every good and gracious work throughout the year, as you proceed “from faith to faith.” **

May the Lord bless you all.

Amen.

* Malachi 3:1.

† John 14:3.

‡ Hebrews 10:20.

§ Psalm 35:9 (LXX).

** Cf. Romans 1:17.

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