

19/02/2024

REMARKS By His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America At the Archon Dinner 47th Annual Folk Dance and Choral Festival



Beloved Brother, Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco,

Your Graces and Reverend Fathers,

Honorable Christina Valassopoulou, Consul General of Greece in Los Angeles

Beloved Archon Depoutatos Gerry and Jeannie Ranglas, our gracious hosts for the evening,

Dear and Esteemed Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and Friends,

I would like to begin by thanking the Archons of the Order of Saint Andrew, who have so generously sponsored tonight's gathering. I also want to thank you for your generosity to my humble person by this precious gift. The support of the Archons to my personal ministry and the greater ministry of our Holy Mother Church is deeply moving. As Archons, you are leaders within our spiritual Γένος, the international community of Orthodox Christians who identify as children of the Ecumenical Throne.

The word "ecumenical" is extremely important to understand properly, because it points to the spiritual reality of what the Church is. Normally translated, "inhabited world," it has always referred to a community of continuity - whether the world of the Greek language and culture, or to the Christianized Roman Empire that Saint Constantine formed.

But there is further meaning in the writings of the New Testament, found in the Epistle to the Hebrews: τὴν οἰκουμένην τὴν μέλλουσαν, the oikoumene to come, meaning the Kingdom Come.[1]

So, we see that "oikoumene" has layers of meaning, and it finds its ultimate significance as a bridge between earth and heaven, between time and eternity.

In this light, the term “Ecumenical Throne” takes on new importance. Inasmuch as the Phanar is an institution – founded upon earth but by divine mandate – it is a vehicle through which we connect ourselves to the Life Divine. And not only through the Holy Mysteries, but through the values, commitments and teaching of the Holy Mother Church of Constantinople.

The fact that the Archons have taken such a keen interest in FDF is a most positive sign, because it underscores their commitment to building up the Body of Christ through all the means at our disposal. To engage the arts of the Γένος – the Greek and Orthodox People of God – is a praiseworthy endeavor indeed!

The in-gathering of God’s People through FDF is a worthy ministry, and every member of the Metropolis of San Francisco deserves our congratulations and gratitude.

You are building memories and connections here that will last a lifetime. The participation of our young people, together with their adult mentors and advisors, is a sign of the health and vitality of our Church.

You, the Archons of the Ecumenical Throne, are sponsoring the edification of the Church. And for that, I am extremely grateful and proud. I am thankful at all times for your commitment to the Mother Church and your support of this Sacred Eparchy of America. And I am proud to stand shoulder to shoulder with you in all the endeavors that you pursue on behalf of the freedom and stability of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

May these days at FDF be blessed and happy for you, and may God guide you and your families in perfect health and spiritual prosperity through the forthcoming period of Triodion.

May the Good Lord bless you all! Amen.

Photos: GOARCH/D. Panagos

[1] Hebrews 2:5.

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