

20/02/2024

# **ARCHPASTORAL EXHORTATION By His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America At the Metropolis of Denver Clergy-Laity Assembly and Philoptochos Convention**



Your Grace, Bishop Constantine of Sassisma,

Protopresbyter Lou Christopoulos, Assistant Chancellor of the Metropolis,

Protopresbyter George Gartelos, President of Clergy Syndesmos,

Archon Depoutatos Sam Galeotos, Vice Chair of the Metropolitan Council

Archon Aktouarios Dr. Gregory Papadeas, Regional Archon Commander

Stella Piches, President of the Metropolis Philoptochos,

Reverend Fathers,

Esteemed Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate,

Honored Members of Leadership 100,

Dear Sisters of the Metropolis Philoptochos,

Church Music Federation Members,

YAL and GOYA Representatives,

Esteemed Delegates to the Clergy-Laity Assembly,

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I am so very pleased indeed to join you in Tulsa, for the Clergy-Laity Assembly of the Holy Metropolis of Denver. As all of you noticed, I did not address specifically your beloved Archpastor, His Eminence Metropolitan Isaiah of Denver.

He is currently at the Holy Archangels Monastery in Kendalia, Texas, having just celebrated his ninety-third birthday last month. Allow me a few moments to say something about your Metropolitan, and by beloved brother in Christ, in his absence. His Eminence has served you as both the last Bishop of your time as a Diocese, and your first Hierarch as a Metropolis.

His extraordinary tenure of over thirty years of archpastoral care and leadership in this – the physically largest of the ecclesiastical regions of the Sacred Archdiocese of America – is a testimony to his faith, his vigor, and his deep and abiding sense of service to others. Now, in his waning years of incredible ministry, he has returned to the monastic life and environment that he cherished so much as a young man, but which he sacrificed for a lifetime of service to the needs of the Church.

Let us all hold His Eminence in our hearts and minds with abiding gratitude, deep respect, and warm affection. God is the one who measures the length of our days, and his days have been many and blessed. May they continue to be so. Πολλὰ τὰ Ἔτη Του!

Being here with the plenitude of the Denver Metropolis, and without Metropolitan Isaiah's physical presence, I feel very keenly his spiritual presence among us. We are all standing upon the many edifices that he has built over these last three decades, and I know we all have a lasting appreciation of the gift of his ministry. The progress in the Metropolis under his guiding hand has been extraordinary. And I can see that it is going strong among you, too, the esteemed participants in this Clergy-Laity Assembly.

The fact that you are all together in a communion and community of love and respect is also a wonderful testament to the ministry of His Grace Bishop Constantine of Sassisma.

In the brief time since his assignment to this Metropolis, he has managed to visit every parish – which is no small feat!

Together with Metropolitan Isaiah, I have every confidence in the ministry of Bishop Constantine. And I believe that I express the gratitude and satisfaction of all for everything that he brings to the spiritual welfare of this blessed Metropolis.

As you all look forward through the work of this Assembly, I want to encourage you to keep to the path that you have been travelling. As I look around the room, I behold the plenitude of the Church – in the bright and smiling faces of each and every one of you.

So often, we tend to see the Church only through a part of the Body of Christ – whether it is the clergy, or the monastics, or the parish leadership, or the organizations. But as Saint Paul has told us:

For just as the body is one but has many members – yet all the members are of one body, even though they are many in number – the body is one. This is how Christ is as well.[1]

The inclusivity of this Clergy-Laity Assembly speaks to the vitality of the Metropolis, and is a proper understanding of the Church, which does indeed possess many members, but is always unified in Christ.

We all know that there are struggles about resources in every ministry. But we should never allow such paucity to keep us from the work of the Church. We can multiply the effects of our ministries through our love and devotion. We can take a little, and turn it into much more than we could ever conceive – much like our Lord did when He fed the Five Thousand in the wilderness.

Everyone remembers this story; it is the only miracle that occurs in all Four Gospels. And there are two ways to look at it. First, we can easily say that the Lord, Who created Heaven and Earth, easily multiplied five loaves and two fish to feed the thousands. But there is another way to think about this miracle as well.

Perhaps, when the young boy offered all that he had – the five loaves and two fish – (and I note here the detail from the Gospel of John, that the boy's loaves were of the poorest quality), perhaps, the people who witnessed this pure offering were inspired in their hearts. Perhaps, many of those thousands had brought food with them that day, but were keeping it hidden only for themselves. But when they witnessed the generosity of this young lad, their hearts were freed to be generous with others. I am not saying that one version is better or worse than the other. But I think you will all agree with me. We can consider them both miracles.

What we need is to maintain and augment our generosity of spirit, our capacities to love and forgive, our commitment to philanthropy and compassion.

The blessings of this Metropolis are self-evident: outstanding clergy and lay

leadership, established communities, and a desire to live the Gospel!

You have every advantage. You have every opportunity. With God's help, and through the intercessions of His Holy Mother, whose Blesséd Nativity is honored at the Metropolis Chapel, I have every confidence that you will proceed from glory to glory, to the honor and praise of the Most Holy Trinity, in Whose light and love we live and thrive.

Amen!

[1] I Corinthians 12:12.

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