

22/02/2024

## **Metropolis of Denver Clergy Laity Assembly and Clergy Syndesmos Retreat**



His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America attended the Metropolis of Denver Clergy Laity Assembly and Clergy Syndesmos Retreat held in Tulsa, OK from Monday, February 19 through Tuesday, February 21, 2024. The chancellor of the Metropolis, His Grace Bishop Constantine of Sassima warmly welcomed His Eminence of behalf of His Eminence Metropolitan Isaiah of Denver and the entire Metropolis. The Archbishop participated in the works of the assembly and had the opportunity to dialogue with the participants on a variety of topics discussed.

In his address to the Clergy Laity Assembly the Archbishop stated, “Allow me a few moments to say something about your Metropolitan, Metropolitan Isaiah, and my beloved brother in Christ, in his absence. 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... 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.”

Speaking of Bishop Constantine of Sassima the Archbishop noted that, “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 Sassima. 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.”

At another point the Archbishop commented, “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... 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 Blessed 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.”

In thanking Archbishop Elpidophoros, Bishop Constantine of Sassima, on behalf of the entire Metropolis, presented the Archbishop with an epigonation which depicts Christ as the Shepherd surrounded by his flock, in recognition of his ministry as the Chief-Shepherd of the Sacred Archdiocese of America.

On Tuesday at the opening session of the clergy syndesmos retreat which was held at the Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in Tulsa, OK, Bishop Constantine welcomed the Archbishop who opened the retreat with his address to the clergy. The Archbishop commended the clergy, expressing his paternal gratitude and admiration, for skillfully navigating the unique local challenges of ministry in this region of the country. He notably said, “You, the priests of the Metropolis, are the spiritual phalanx of our Church in America. And like the ancient phalanx, it was only as strong as it was bound together in common cause. In other words, your brotherhood as clergy is founded upon love. Love for God; love for one another; love for your flocks.”

At the conclusion of the opening session Archbishop Elpidophoros honored Fr. George Gartelos, the presiding priest of the host parish and the president of the clergy syndesmos, with the Centennial Cross of the Archdiocese in recognition of his ministry.

Before departing, the Archbishop had the opportunity to share in a meal with the clergy and speak with and greet each of them personally. In his closing remarks he assured them of his paternal love and care for them and their families and his readiness to support them and their ministry in any way that he can.

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