

23/02/2024

Remarks By Archbishop Elpidophoros of America At the Reception of the ABS Board of Trustees



Dear Sister in Christ, Katherine Barnhart, Chair of the ABS Board of Trustees,

Esteemed Board Members and Staff,

Beloved Friends,

I am so very pleased to welcome all of you to the Headquarters of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, and to thank you for spending such substantive and generous time with us for your own deliberations. I would like to congratulate the new President and CEO of the American Bible Society, Jennifer Holloran, who I understand became official just two days ago. And I would like to acknowledge the former Interim-President, Darrin Podeschi, who continues to serve ABS as Executive Consultant.

I also want to acknowledge our two Board members, Theo Nicolakis and Elaine Allen, and to note Theo's long involvement with ABS and the wonderful fruits of the collaborations between us. ABS has as a core value the work of serving the Churches of God and, as the Apostle Paul says, to "equip the saints for the work of ministry, for the edification of the Body of Christ, until all of us arrive at the unity of the Faith and the unity of the knowledge of the Son of God." *

Reflecting on the relationship of our Archdiocese, and indeed all the Churches, to the American Bible Society, I am struck by the generosity that prevails time and time again. ABS gives unselfishly to the Body of Christ wherever it can, something for which we are all so very grateful.

When I was president of the Turkish Bible Society, I experienced firsthand the unique position of ABS, which extends itself around the world for the sake of bringing the Gospel to "every tribe and tongue, every people and nation, to make them kings and priests for our God, to reign over the earth," as the Book of Revelation reminds us.† Wherever ABS engages, we know that the work of our Lord is at hand.

I also recall that His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew visited the headquarters of ABS on his 2009 Apostolic Visit to the United States, which coincided with the opening of an exhibition of important icons. I am told that he was eager to see the exceptional texts from the rare book collection, and that he was particularly pleased to hold in his hands the first printed Lakota translation of the New Testament. In his remarks at ABS and MOBIA those fifteen years ago, he shared his sense of "the solidarity of the apostolic commission to share Christ's Gospel with every person in every corner of the world." ‡ And I want you to know that we, too, follow the Patriarch's enthusiastic commitment to fulfilling the injunction of our Lord to "preach the Gospel to every creature."

May the American Bible Society serve as a catalyst for continued innovation in the sphere of Scriptural engagement.

As I understand your schedule, after today's lunch you will all visit the Saint Nicholas National Shrine at the World Trade Center. Completing the Shrine was a major challenge that I faced upon my election as Archbishop of America, and I am still in amazement at the wondrous generosity that this undertaking revealed in the hearts of so many people.

As well as a cenotaph, if you will, to those thousands who perished and to those gave their lives that day in order save others, the Shrine also stands as a place of

ministry to those whose hearts remain shattered by loss and grief. I was very pleased to learn of the ABS Trauma Healing Ministry and how we might incorporate this resource into the ministry of the Shrine. I know that Theo and Elaine will keep me abreast of developments in this regard, as the Shrine is much more than a parish of our Archdiocese.

Saint Nicholas National Shrine is a statement about what it means to be the Christian Church in America in the face of hatred and violence. It is a statement written in stone, in the very same marble that built the Parthenon of Athens 2,500 years ago, perhaps the greatest visible symbol of democracy. It is a statement about forgiveness, mercy and love in the face of polarization and oftentimes prejudice against those different from us. It is a statement adorned with images of the glory of the Gospel, designed to soften even the most hardened heart. I know that your visit there will resonate in your spirits at a profound depth.

Finally, I want to say to all of you, my dear brother and sisters, that the doors of this Archdiocese are like the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem – always open. You are most welcome in this place, and I hope you will visit us often. The Greek Orthodox Church, which has been the faithful and true guardian of the Sacred Texts of the New Testament and the Septuagint, is excited to work with you and to explore innovative ways of collaboration.

May the Lord bless our fellowship this day, and every day.

Amen!

* Ephesians 4:12-13a.

† Revelation 5:9-10.

‡ Remarks of HAH EP Bartholomew at ABS/MOBIA, October 30, 2009.

Photos: GOARCH/Dimitrios Panagos

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