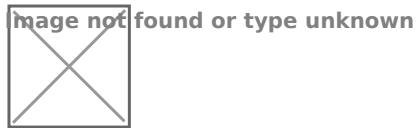


Archbishop Elpidophoros Attends Metropolis of San Francisco Clergy Laity Assembly and Clergy Retreat



DUNLAP, CA - In the afternoon of Tuesday, March 6, 2024 the Clergy Laity Assembly of the Metropolis of San Francisco came to a close. It marked the end of a fruitful gathering which provided a forum for the leaders of the communities to deliberate, discuss, and learn about important matters which concern their parishes, their Metropolis, and our Archdiocese as a whole.

The Reverend Dr. Nicholas Louh offered an edifying presentation expanding on the verse taken from Saint Paul's letter to the Colossians "For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through His blood, shed on the cross." Which highlighted the theme of the assembly which was "Contemplate. Reconcile. Unify."

Commenting on the presentation offered, His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America stated, "I am certain that you will all agree with me that the highlight of this gathering was the presentations offered by our dear Fr. Nicholas Louh who has the gift of preaching, and I am not certain where this gift comes from but I suppose it is the Holy Land because, as you may know, he is from Palestine. Perhaps that is the secret - this is a region that has offered to the rest of the world inspiring preachers and teachers of the faith. It is this blessing that is upon you my dear Father...God has blessed you - it is so apparent that you truly believe what you are teaching, and this is why you keep us all engaged with the Spirit which flows from your mouth."

Metropolitan Gerasimos presented the Archbishop with a donation of \$5000 for the Archbishop Elpidophoros Camping Ministries Fund saying "When Saint Nicholas Ranch was acquired over 40 years ago the main focus was the development of a youth summer camp program. Since that time the Ranch has proved time and again to provide and transformational experience for generations of youth...we know how important the camping ministries are to you, Your Eminence, and in

early November there was a highly successful event to celebrate your Nameday – it was during this event that you launched the youth summer camp scholarship fund. Now on behalf of the entire Metropolis please accept this humble gift for that sacred mission and program which you have initiated.”

In thanking the Archbishop for his presence and participation in the work of the Assembly Metropolitan Gerasimos stated, “Your Eminence, we are aware that you have many demands on your schedule, however, you continue to put forth and extraordinary effort to spend meaningful time on the west coast – which enhances our connection to the Archdiocese – the one church united – and emphasizes our unity, common faith, and shared love for Jesus Christ.”

His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros concluded the the Clergy Laity Assembly of the Metropolis of San Francisco by saying: “We have come to the close of these Clergy Laity Assembly deliberations, and I want to congratulate all of you for your dedication to the health and well-being of this God-saved Metropolis of San Francisco...We need these local Assemblies and national Congresses in order to keep in touch with our Faithful in the Parishes, where the People of God live out their lives.Every voice deserves to be heard. Every parishioner merits our consideration.”

Offering the delegates and all those present with a final blessing, the Archbishop noted, “May all of you travel the path through the Holy and Great Lent with good intentions and with spiritual focus, such that you arrive with joy and assurance at the Holy Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

That same evening the Archbishop, together with Metropolitan Gerasimos, Bishop Ioannis, and the clergy brotherhood of the Metropolis of San Francisco began the clergy retreat by celebrating Great Vespers on the beautiful and pristine grounds of the the Holy Monastery of the Life-Giving Spring. The sisterhood of over 30 nuns warmly welcomed everyone and offered abrahamic hospitality to all.

In his farewell to the Archbishop, Metropolitan Gerasimos offered the following, “Your Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros, father of our Sacred Archdiocese, ‘behold how good it is for brothers to dwell in unity’. It would be nice for us to remain in this place [the monastery] and to be in your presence for a longer period of time – we have spent time together [these past few days] in prayer and learning. The fathers of our Metropolis together with the lay people present truly enjoyed your presence here with us. In your keynote remarks, you gave us the identity of the priesthood, you set the trajectory of our ministry, and you put forward guidelines on how we can be better priests and servants of the Lord – in unity and love... We are all grateful for your presence here. We know that you will shortly

leave us because you are called to be somewhere else. May the feet which carried you here be blessed for as it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! And this is the message you gave these two day that you have been with us. We thank you and we ask the good Lord to bless you with a great deal of inspiration, and above all health, so that you can continue to guide our Sacred Archdiocese and the Church in the United States toward the kingdom of God – as you have done since you arrived here with us. There will be difficult moments and challenges, as is the case with everything that is human, but rest assured, Your Eminence, that all of us are always praying for you...’

In his keynote remarks to the clergy Archbishop Elpidophoros said, “These past few days being with the Ecclesia of the West have been not only gratifying, but truly edifying. The synergy of Clergy and Laity in this Metropolis, manifest in your Clergy Laity Assembly, is a model of Church ministry and governance. I have enjoyed my time with you and the teachings around the theme of “Contemplate, Reconcile, & Unify” – all worthy subjects for reflection. For us, who are clergy and are responsible for leading the liturgical life of the Church and providing sound pastoral guidance to the Faithful, the consideration of this theme has been both informative and illuminating.”

The Archbishop, in bidding farewell to the brotherhood ,continued on, “It is true, as the Lord says, ‘where two or three are gathered in my name there also am I with them’ and we have felt this over the last few days. I want to congratulate you, Your Eminence [Metropolitan Gerasimos] for building up this Metropolis of San Francisco with your paternal love and here you reap the fruits of your hard work – we see all these incredible clergy that your hands have created and that our Lord has blessed and sent into His vineyard... I pray that you and your parishes enjoy a fruitful and productive Great Lent, such that you reap a spiritual harvest of unparalleled blessings in and through Holy Week and arrive at His triumphant Resurrection from the dead with minds and hearts raised on high, and souls refreshed and renewed. Καλή Σαρακοστή σε ὄλους!”

Photo: Kosta Petrakos

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