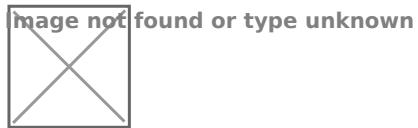


Archbishop Elpidophoros Archdiocesan District Clergy-Laity Assembly Address



Your Grace(s),

Your Grace Archdiocesan Chancellor, Bishop-Elect of Diokleia Nektarios,

Reverend Chancellor of the District, Protopresbyter Elias Villis,

Vice Chairman Nicholas Balidis,

Reverend Fathers and Presvyteras,

Delegates to this Clergy Laity Assembly,

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It seems fitting, that as we pray throughout the Holy Lenten Season to arrive at the Holy Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, we are meeting as the Archdiocesan District Clergy-Laity Assembly in the District's one parish named for this glorious truth of our faith.

Indeed, as Saint Paul once said:

If Christ is not risen, then our preaching is worthless and your faith is futile. If Christ is not risen, then our faith is in vain and you are still in your sins. But now Christ is risen from the dead! He has become the first-fruits of them that slept![*]

This fundamental truth of our faith is the goal to which every activity and energy of the Church should be oriented, for it is the purpose of our existence.

Therefore, brothers and sisters, let the work of our Clergy-Laity Assembly hold forth the Resurrection of our Lord as our ultimate aspiration. And let all our deliberations be done in the Light of His Arising on the Third Day from the Tomb.

We spend these days of the Holy Fast – which is an offering, a tithe of time and days from our liturgical year – in contemplation and the discipline of spiritual practice. Our modern way of life often makes this difficult, as we have so many

activities and responsibilities to attend to, that making time for personal and communal prayer, for fasting with awareness, and for acts of charity, is challenging. Yet, somehow, every year we travel this Lenten path, a path that delivers us to the exquisite services of Holy Week, from which we all draw inspiration and encouragement. And we finally arrive at our ultimate hope - the Resurrection.

As we consider the plans for our Archdiocese District here at this Clergy Laity Assembly, everything that we do has a special vocation to reflect the Resurrection. Our parishes are constantly in flux. Parishioners come and go - whether to college or moving away from their home community to a new one. We innovate to appeal to every segment of the community, to offer them practical engagement with the Church. This is healthy and necessary, especially in the age of social media distractions. But let us never forget our focus. We exist as Church in order to bring about the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, and to prepare for the Kingdom that is coming. And it is the Resurrection that enables us to do so.

In the Lord's prayer - every time we recite it - we pray:

"Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven."

On earth as it is in Heaven is our charge to bring about the spiritual and emotional content of our Faith in our everyday lives. While we bear the body of flesh and live in this world, we can yet experience the joys of Heaven. And this is the one of the main purposes of our parishes - to be that place where the values and character of Heaven are practiced.

Instead of conflict, we practice peace.

Instead of jealousy and envy, we practice generosity and kindness.

Instead of competitiveness, we practice harmony and synergy.

Instead of resentment, we practice helpfulness and contentment.

These and many more are the fruits of the Resurrection, when we embrace its reality for our own lives. And they prepare us for the coming Kingdom.

It may be true that no one knows the hour or the day of the Glorious Second Coming, when our Lord Jesus Christ will come forth to meet us, but it is absolutely certain that each and every one of us will go forth at some point to meet Him. That is why, in the face of our mortality, we say "Thy Kingdom come!" We do not want to be fearful or anxious about our eventual meeting with our Lord. The hope of the

Resurrection prepares us for this inevitable truth. We see it in every Holy Week - our Lord Jesus Christ died on the Cross in His Humanity, so that He might gift unto us eternal life in the Heavenly Kingdom of the Most Holy Trinity. It is our greatest hope.

Therefore, I bless this Assembly for its present work for the good of our parishes. Let us always give our best efforts in the light of the Resurrection. I pray that each of your communities will have a blessed and spiritually fulfilling celebration of Holy Week and Pascha, and I look forward to being with many of you during these sacred days.

May God grant us to fulfill the course of the Fast with awareness and attentiveness, until we arrive into the Everlasting Light of our Lord Risen from the dead; through the prayers of His Holy Mother and all the Saints. Amen.

Photo: GOARCH/D. Panagos

[*] I Corinthians 15:14, 17, 20.

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