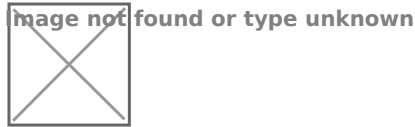


Address By Archbishop Elpidophoros of America At the Ordination of Bishop-Elect Anthony of Synada



Your Eminences and Graces, beloved brothers in the Holy Spirit,

Dear clergy and faithful,

Your Grace Bishop-Elect Anthony of Synada,

Today, Your Grace, you are elevated into the ranks of the Episcopacy of our Holy Orthodox Church. Hierarchs, clergy and friends from across the country have gathered to welcome you with the cry: AXIOS!

As I consider this most significant transition in your life, I would like to reflect for a moment on your late and ever-memorable predecessor in the Titular and once-shining See of Synada, because I knew him at the Phanar for many, many years.

I remember the late Metropolitan Dionysios of Synada from my earliest days serving at the Sacred Center of our Faith – first as a priest, then Bishop and finally Metropolitan. He was a unique personality – some might say eccentric – but utterly devoted to the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the sacred person of His All-Holiness.

He fell asleep in the Lord just over three years ago, in April of 2021, and the See has remained vacant until your election. But the See of Synada in Phrygia of Asia Minor was not always a titular See. The city has a history that dates back to the aftermath of the Trojan War. And when the Christian Faith came to Synada, it proved to be the home of many saints, martyrs and a remarkable Bishop – the Confessor and Wonderworker Agapitos.

The fact that His All-Holiness chose this See for your title seems to me to hold significance on many levels. In your nomination by the Holy Eparchial Synod, there is a recognition of your long and successful service in the Church as an educator – both as a layman and as a cleric. In your election to the See of Synada, there is an example of the ever-memorable Metropolitan Dionysios and his devotion to the

Holy Great Church of Christ.

And in the history of Synada, there is an example of your distant predecessor Saint Agapitos, who will be your constant intercessor before the Throne of God, as you complete the course of your πολιτεία as a Bishop like he did – instructing the People of God in the Orthodox Faith, and living in virtue and sincerity.

The Bishop takes up a very special ministry – one hinted at during Holy Week, in the Gospel Reading for the Matins of Holy Tuesday. The Sadducees confront our Lord with the story of the woman who married seven brothers. They then try to entrap Him with their legal arguments and are stupefied by the Lord's answers. But this "Levirate" marriage custom contains a special meaning for the Hierarchs of the Church.

In Saint Gregory the Great's classic, "Book of Pastoral Rule," he describes us as those who fulfill the type of the Levirate Marriage, where the brother must marry the wife of his deceased brother, and raise up children unto his name. He writes:

Now the deceased brother is the Lord Jesus Christ, Who, after the glory of the resurrection, said, "Go tell My brethren." For He died as it were without children, in that He had not yet filled up the number of His elect.[*]

And is this not what we do? We, who are the younger brothers of the One Who gave Himself up for the life of the world? Do we not raise up children in His Holy Name, calling them, "Christians," when they come up from the Fountain of Baptism, the womb of the Church? Thus, we echo the final pronouncement with which the Lord dumbfounded the Sadducees:

"He is not the God of the dead, but of the living!"[†]

Christ, the Elder Brother Who willingly dies for us, but as the One Risen from the dead, He empowers us to raise up children to His Glorious Name. What a privilege for us, to be granted this special grace.

My beloved Bishop-Elect, may your Episcopacy be infused with such grace, so that the ancient glory of Synada and all your predecessors shines through all your ministries. And may your words and actions breathe life into the faithful you serve, so that they may know the God of the Living. Amen.

Photos: GOARVH/Dimitrios Panagos

[*] Liber Regulae Pastoralis, chapter 5.

[†] Matthew 22:32.

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