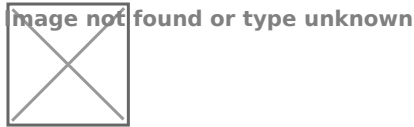


Archbishop Elpidophoros of America Celebrates the Challenge Liturgy at Archangel Michael Church Port Washington, NY



Saturday of Lazarus April 27, 2024, His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America celebrated the Challenge Liturgy at Archangel Michael Church in Port Washington, NY with Archdeacon Dionysios. Created in 1990, the Challenge Liturgy reaches out to Orthodox Christians with intellectual and developmental disabilities, bringing them into the full life of the parish. All metro-area New York challenged Orthodox Christians are invited regardless of parish or jurisdictional affiliation. Celebrated on the third Saturday of every month, individuals of all ages with special needs from the surrounding communities, and their families, are welcome to participate in this beautiful liturgy which offers an environment appropriate to the special needs of the participants.

In welcoming the Archbishop Fr. John Lardas, presiding priest of the parish stated, "Your Eminence, it is such a blessing to have participated in this beautiful Liturgy that you have celebrated as a priest today, and it speaks to the humility of our incredible spiritual leader who adores our Challenge Divine Liturgy and wanted to keep things simple and intimate within our community. Your Eminence, my heart is overflowing with the love that you are expressing, that is the love of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

In his Homily to the faithful at this Liturgy, His Eminence stated, "As we prepare to traverse this Holy Week, let us listen deeply when we are in Church and attend the services. Let us listen for the Voice of the Lord to speak to us, whether softly or loudly. This Challenge Liturgy challenges us all to bend our ear to the Word of God. The voice of the Lord, the words of the Lord. He is calling your name, just like Lazaros, to set you free. Listen for His voice this week. Quiet your hearts and minds, and come to the Church, where you hear the echoes of His Message of love and truth."

During the Divine Liturgy, the Archbishop together with Fr. Pedro Gomez Chrismated Gloria Castro into the Orthodox faith. Gloria's son Martin had attended

the Challenge Liturgy for many years and passed away 5 years ago. Fr. Gomez, who offered the prayers in Spanish, Gloria's native language, is leading the Spanish-speaking ministry of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. In welcoming Gloria to the Orthodox faith, Archbishop Elpidophoros said, "Gloria, whose son, Martin, was a participant of this Challenge Liturgy, has come to our Orthodox Faith through many channels. Through the ministry to her son. Through her participation in this Parish's last Pilgrimage to the Holy Land. And most of all, through your loving example of what it truly means to be an Orthodox Christian, regardless of your background or personal history and identity."

Read His Eminence's Homily [here](#).

Photos: GOARCH/Dimitrios Panagos

goarch.org