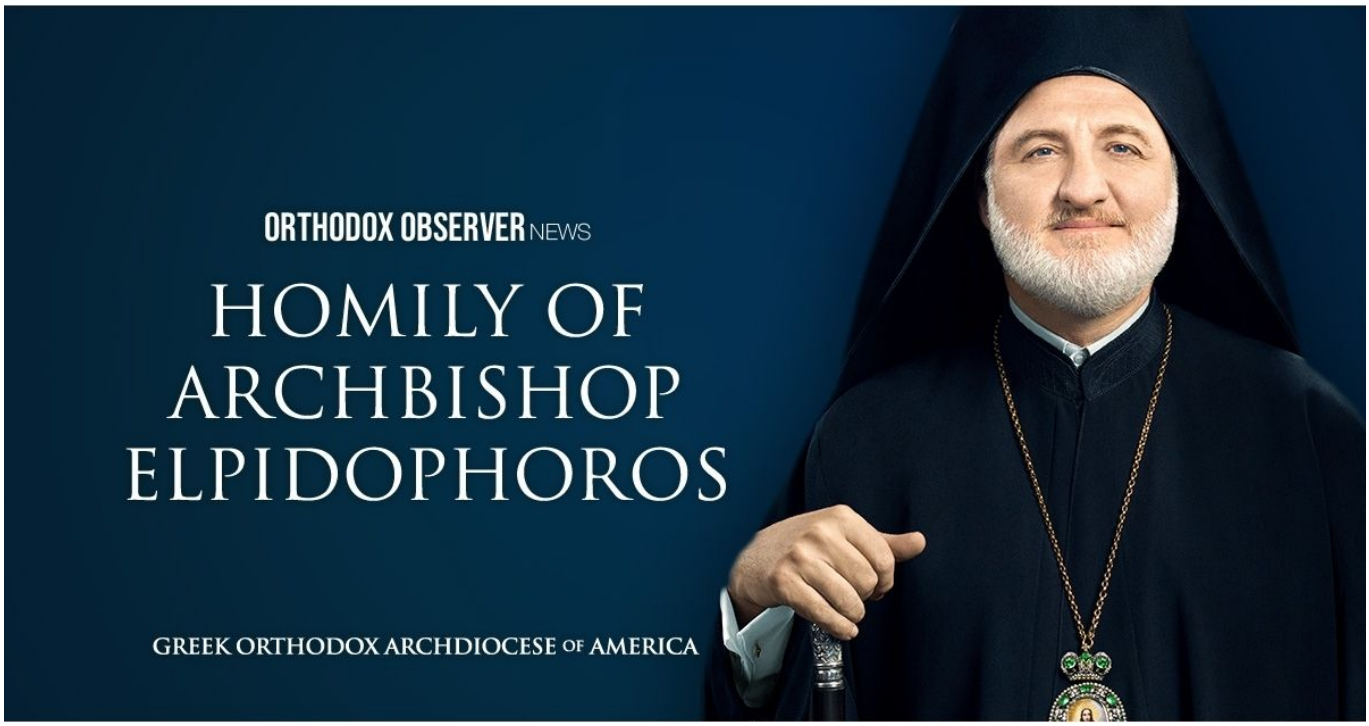
16/05/2024

Archbishop Elpidophoros Homily at Great Vespers and Stavrophoria



His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros
Homily at Great Vespers and Stavrophoria
May 15, 2024
Hellenic College Holy Cross
Brookline, Massachusetts
Dear Members of the Alumni,

Brothers and Sisters in the Risen Christ,

Χριστός Ἀνέστη!

Christ is Risen!

Tonight we celebrate those observing their tenth, twenty-fifth, and fiftieth anniversaries of graduation from our precious Σχολή, awarding them Alumni Crosses to recognize their years of service. I find the particular confluence of Feastdays quite auspicious for this award, as we have just left the commemoration on the Fifteenth of May of Saint Pachomius the Great, the great Egyptian father of cenobitic monasticism. And we now celebrate the Great Vespers commemorating

the Holy Patriarch of Constantinople, Saint Nicholas Mystikos.

One of the etymologies of Saint Pachomius' name is the Coptic word for eagle. And we all know that the symbol of the Theological School and College has always been the "Eagle" representing the exalted theology of the Evangelist John.

This eagle, beheld by the Evangelist in his Vision of Revelation, is one of the Theriomorph Living Beings surrounding the Throne of God. As John records:

The first Being was like a lion, the second Being was like a young bull, the third Being bore the face of a person, and the fourth Being was like an eagle on the wing. [*]

Thus, we are reminded by a simple mention of Saint Pachomius of the mystical flight of theology that we are called to take. The truth is, the seminary is in many ways a nest, a place for newly hatched "eagles" of theology to be nurtured and sheltered while they develop their spiritual muscles and wings. This week of graduation is the launch of all the fledglings who have matured through their years on this Holy Hill. And when this happy day arrives, I can think of no better example to inspire our most recent graduates, than the Alumni who came before them from the very same nest.

For whether you have graduated from Hellenic College or Holy Cross, the proclamation of the Gospel – symbolized by the Eagle with spread wings – this is your mission and your message. In word and deed. And the Alumni we honor this evening provide a shining example of both words and deeds that we can all be proud of.

But we have more than the memory of Saint Pachomius. We have the Holy Patriarch Nicholas Mystikos whom we celebrate tonight.

If he is remembered for anything, it is for his principled stand against the Emperor Leo the Sixth's attempt at a fourth marriage. And the end result was the acceptance of the child born of that uncanonical marriage, the future Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitos, one of the most famous and indeed, literary, Autocrats of New Rome.

Saint Nicholas Mystikos reminds us all that theology must be as practical as it is theoretical. Yes, we are to soar into the Heavens with the eagle, but we are to keep our feet planted firmly on this good earth, so that we may find real solutions to the problems of real people.

The Alumni present here this evening remind us that we can and must do both. They spread their wings upon leaving their Alma Mater, and they have demonstrated good and productive service to the Church for all the years they have been engaged in ministry. The award of these crosses to these wonderful Alumni of our School is but a small token of our appreciation for their dedication to our Holy Orthodox Faith, and their devotion to our Church.

May the Risen Lord always bless them and their families, strengthening their faith so that with their wings they may fly to the summit of Heaven, and with their ministries, they may always be pleasing to the Lord and serve His Holy Church.

Through the prayers of Saint Nicholas Mystikos, Patriarch of Constantinople, and Saint Pachomius the Great, may they fulfill every good and pleasing thing in His sight. Christ is Risen!

[*] Revelation 4:7.

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