27/05/2024

Archbishop Elpidophoros of America Remarks at the Official Opening of the 4th Archon International Conference on Religious Freedom



Your Beatitude, Archbishop Ieronymos II, Archbishop of Athens and All Greece,

Honorable John Chrysoolakis, Secretary General for Greeks abroad and public dipolmacy, representative of the Greek government

Your Eminences and Your Graces,

Honorable Haris Doukas, Mayor of Immortal Athens,

Esteemed Archons of the Ecumenical Mother Church of Constantinople,

Beloved Sisters and Brothers in the Risen Lord,

Χριστὸς Ἀνέστη!

This moment – this sacred καιρός – when such a highly esteemed company of noble and spiritual personages is gathered for the sake of the Great Church of Christ, is deeply moving and profoundly inspirational.

We are here at the Agora of Ancient Athens, as much the birthplace of Western Civilization as anywhere in the world. From the Stoa of Attalos to the Church of the Holy Apostles, the Agora encompasses the legacy of Hellas and the essence of what it means to be human, created in the image and likeness of God.

We are opening the Fourth Archon International Conference on Religious Freedom, and I have the extraordinary honor of speaking between two of the giants of the Orthodox world: His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew (who will address us in a few minutes), and His Beatitude Archbishop Ieronymos II, Archbishop of Athens and All Greece, who has just concluded his profound and positive message. I cannot help but feel an inadequate bridge between these two monumental personalities of our Holy Orthodox Church, but allow me a moment to reflect upon this sacred καιρός, when the Archons of the Ecumenical Throne are manifesting their truly ecumenical character and spirit.

We are assembled in Athens, at this epicenter of intellectual, spiritual, and indeed, noetic history, to bring forth the amazing potentialities of the Archon movement around the world. We span oceans and continents, and we are gathered to bring about a new vision for the support and nourishment of the Mother Church of Orthodoxy – the Holy and Great Church of Christ.

We live in times of great conflict and great perplexity. Christians of all stripes are tossed to and fro upon stormy and dark waters. And it is the Phanar, that light of pure Orthodox teaching and spirituality, that illumines the way forward for all Christians, into the safe harbors where peace is practiced instead of war, and love conquers every form of hatred and malice.

The Archons of Ancient Athens had a history that reaches back over three thousand years. And we Christians have just entered our Third Millennium.

That is why the Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate have gathered here from around the globe; so that just as the Archons of Athens held together for the sake of their State, we might hold together – a phalanx of righteousness and peace – for the sake of the purely spiritual mission of the Mother Church of Constantinople.

We give abundant thanks for the clarity that Greece gives the world, and we shall hear more of this distinct Hellenic brilliance. But for now, we rejoice in the presence

of these two spiritual fathers of prodigious spiritual power and persuasion.

Giving thanks to His Beatitude, we await the words and wisdom of His All-Holiness. Both are exemplars par excellence of the Gospel, and we are blessed indeed to have them with their steady hands on the rudder of the Church, as it navigates the tempests and squalls of contemporary life.

May God grant them Many Years of health and blessings, so that we may live in the light they bring to our lives, casting away all shadow and gloom, and reveal the light of the Risen Christ in our world.

Amen!

Photos: GOARCH/Dimitrios Panagos

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