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Celebrating the Feast Day of Saint Bartholomew at Saint Bartholomew’s Church in New York City



His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America presided from the throne the Divine Liturgy celebrating the memory of Saint Bartholomew, patron saint of His All-Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch at Saint Bartholomew’s Church in midtown Manhattan. Participating in the Divine Liturgy were Chancellor of the Archdiocesan District Rev. Protopresbyter of the Ecumenical Throne Elias Villis, Rev. Archdeacon Dionysios Papiris, and Master Chanter of St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and National Shrine Dimitrios Katsilkis.

Saint Bartholomew’s Church is a parish of the Episcopal diocese of New York that was founded in 1835. The Church, constructed in 1917 is a Comm National Historic Landmark and has been recognized as a true example of early 20th century ecclesiastical architecture. This is the third time an Orthodox service has been celebrated at St. Bartholomew’s Church on this Feastday, and the first time that

the Patriarchal flag has been flown outside this historic church.

In his remarks to the attendees, His Eminence thanked Bishop Matthew Foster Heyd of the Episcopal Diocese of NY, Right Reverend Dean Wolfe, Rector of Saint Bartholomew's and Reverend Peter Thompson, Vicar of the Parish for their assistance in preparing this Divine Liturgy.

His Eminence also spoke about the meaning of celebrating this day at this church. "There is a reason that we come to Saint Bartholomew's on this day, June 11th, the Feastday of the Ecumenical Patriarch. Yes, it is clearly linked to his Celestial Patron and the dedicatory Saint of this church, but there is much more.

"As I have said many times, His All Holiness is the very definition of ecumenical outreach, and even interfaith outreach, as I witnessed last evening at the Interfaith Center of New York, founded by another great personage of the Episcopal Church in New York, the late Dean James Parks Morton.

"Such connectedness with others is often feared in many Christian communities today, as if contact with those of differing perspectives might somehow pollute one's faith. The political echo-chambers that afflict our Nation are being mirrored – and sometimes even inspired by – the ecclesiastical echo-chambers that pretend to be deaf to the voices songs that surround us.

"But we are here today – in this glorious and famous church – to demonstrate that the courage to listen is more pleasing to God than a sham pretense to faithfulness, that cuts off communication with one's neighbors. And we are neighbors – of the same city and region, and, to an extent, the same history. This courage is precisely what His All Holiness Bartholomew has practiced for the duration of his Patriarchy – the longest in the annals of the Great Church of Christ. He has manifested integrity with love, steadfastness with mercy, and fidelity with candor.

"Thus, the Ecumenical Patriarch models for the Orthodox Christian Church, and for all people of good will, what it means to love your neighbor, even as you claim to love God. For as the Lord Jesus Christ taught us, it is impossible to love God unless you love your neighbor. I am mindful of what the word neighbor – πλησίον – means in the original language of the New Testament: literally, anyone with whom you come in contact. There is no sense in the word of choice, or personal inclination; merely the happenstance of place, for the word comes from the adverb, πέλας, that simply signifies 'nearby.'

"The Patriarch welcomes all at the Phanar, the Sacred Center of worldwide Orthodoxy. Every human being is his potential neighbor, no matter their origin or

experience. He embraces everyone as being homoousios to himself – of the same essential nature. Thus, he prepares the Christian world to celebrate the anniversary of one thousand and seven hundred years of the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea that bequeathed this amazing theological definition to the Church and to the world. This homoousion is why we acknowledge every human being as our neighbor.

“We all know how the Lord Jesus answered the legalist who asked Him, ‘And who is my neighbor.’ The ‘Good’ Samaritan is a parable known across all Christian communities, and yet, it’s principle message seems to be slipping away from those who bear His Holy Name. While we are called to see no stranger, more and more Christians are objectifying others without love, out of fear and insecurity, and magnifying hatred.

Thus, we have come to our neighbor’s church today. In honor of our Ecumenical Patriarch on the Feastday of his Heavenly Patron. To remind the world that the courage to stop on the path, and to reach out to those whom God places in your presence, is an act of love. Love of God, and love of neighbor. They cannot be separated.”

Also attending the Divine Liturgy were Orthodox hierarchs His Grace Bishop Irinej of the Serbian Orthodox Church Diocese of Eastern America, His Eminence Archbishop Daniel of Pamphilon, His Grace Bishop Sevastianos of Zela, His Grace Bishop Joachim of Amissos, His Grace Bishop Spyridon of Amastris, His Grace Bishop Athenagoras of Nazianzos, His Grace Bishop Nektarios of Diokleia, and His Grace Bishop Anthony of Synada. Ecumenical leaders included Rev. Jared R. Stahler of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Monsignor Giuseppe Quirighetti of the Holy See Mission to the United Nations. Rev. Sahag Yemishian, from the Armenian Apostolic Church (Holy See of Cilicia), Rev. Symeon Obadashian of the Armenian Apostolic Church (Holy See of Hetchmiatzin) and Rev. Dr. William Rush, Yale Divinity School. Special guests included Treasurer of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America Elaine Allen, First Vice President of National Philoptochos Anita Kartalopoulos, National Council of Churches Associate General Secretary – Faith & Order/Interreligious Relations/ International Affairs Dr. Anthony Kireopoulos, Executive Director of Leadership 100 Paulette Poulos, and Archon Peter and Aphrodite Skeadas.

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