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## **Keynote Address of His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America at the Grand Banquet of the Young Adult League Conference**



Hyatt Regency Long Beach  
Long Beach, California

August 31, 2019

Your Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos,  
Reverend Clergy,  
Esteemed Lay Servants of the Church,

Beloved Young People,

I am very pleased to be here with all of you today. As I look out and see so many happy faces—faces of our Orthodox young adults from around the Archdiocese of America—I think of the words of the Apostle John: καὶ ταῦτα γράφομεν ἡμεῖς ἵνα ἡ χαρὰ ἡμῶν ᾗ πεπληρωμένη. “We write these things to you, so that our joy may be full.” (1 John 1:4) Just as Saint’s John joy was made full in his spiritual children, so is my own joy made full and complete in you, my beloved young people!

It is truly encouraging to see all of you, coming together here in California, out of your love for Christ and His Church. You have expended time and resources to be here. Some of you have given up vacation days; others must go directly from this weekend to the start of the new school year. You have all made an effort and a sacrifice for the sake of your faith. May the Lord accept this offering in His Kingdom and reward you richly! And I personally express my gratitude for making your life in Christ a priority.

I would like to take a moment to thank also some people whose efforts made this conference so successful. First, I thank my beloved brother hierarch, Metropolitan Gerasimos. His spiritual vision always includes plans for the growth of our Young Adult ministries. His support and encouragement made it possible for the Metropolis of San Francisco to host the conference so beautifully this year.

Your Eminence, may God grant you the fullness of joy as a spiritual father to this Metropolis, and many, many years of archpastoral service!

Second, I want to thank the advisors for this conference, the Honorable Steven and Stacia Counelis. Their involvement in Young Adult ministries has been crucial for the success of many events, both in this Metropolis and around the Archdiocese. They have a heart for the spiritual development of our young people, and their passion translates into action.

Steven and Stacia, I pray that the Lord God bless your beautiful family with many more years of life and health and happiness, as you continue to serve the Church!

Third, I want to thank—on behalf of all of us—the conference chairperson, George Anagnostopoulos. George is a brilliant young man with a zeal for the Church and for the message of salvation in Jesus Christ. George has a gift for team-building, and he has used this gift to make this conference possible. I commend you, George, for your energy and enthusiasm, and for using your talents for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

George, may the Lord bless and keep you, and guide you to even greater works for His glory.

This conference has been a dynamic event from start to finish. You have explored different key aspects of your theme PROCLAIM, from First John 1, verse 3: “We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.” In your sessions and workshops you have explored different aspects of this theme. Please allow me to add just a few more thoughts.

Often when we think of proclaiming the Gospel, we think about talking to people outside of the Church about Jesus Christ. In this verse from the First Epistle of Saint John, however, the goal of the writer is to proclaim Christ to those who are in the Church, who are already believers in the Lord. He sent this epistle to his fellow Christians for a special purpose. That purpose is *κοινωνία*. This is translated with the English word “fellowship”; but “fellowship” does not express the full meaning of *κοινωνία*.

It means more than friendship or spending time together. This word *κοινωνία* means a mutual sharing, a participation in the most important things in the world. It means “communion”: communion as a full and free exchange of all that is good in life; and above all, communion as Holy Communion, sharing the Mystical Supper, partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ. This Communion is the reason for proclaiming.

The purpose of this conference is to bring you into a deeper participation in the Church. As you depart from this blessed gathering, you will have discussed many marvelous thoughts and goals. It is not enough, though, to remember these ideas as intellectual concepts only. The point of proclaiming these truths here today is for you to enter more fully into the sacramental life from this day forward; and to do so with greater reverence for God, with faith and love. This requires a commitment from all of you: the commitment to attend the Liturgy regularly; to prepare for the holy Mysteries carefully; and to embrace the life of prayer fervently.

You will soon return to your everyday routines. There you will have opportunities to proclaim your faith to one another. This may be something new for you—speaking openly of your love for Christ and the Church. It is often easy to share every other detail of our lives with others—except for the things having to do with God. Follow the example of the Apostle John. He proclaimed what he had seen and heard: he was not ashamed of the Gospel.

The Apostle proclaimed his faith by a letter, with ink on parchment. You have so many more ways nowadays to proclaim your faith to each other and to the world. You can stay in touch by phone and email, through Facebook and Twitter. Use these means to encourage each other to stay true to your Church. Strive to be good examples for one another always. Attend the Liturgy each Sunday. And do more than that: get involved! Volunteer and get involved in the life of the Church: of your parish, your Metropolis, our Archdiocese, our Ecumenical Patriarchate. Offer the Lord your time and talents and treasures. In this way, your joy in the Lord will truly be made full.

When the Apostle John spoke of what he had seen and heard, he spoke of signs and wonders, miracles and revelations. He saw Christ walking on water. He saw the Lord transfigured on the mountain. He saw Jesus Christ risen from the dead and ascending into heaven.

We proclaim these events like Saint John, though not in the same way—not as eyewitnesses. Nevertheless, we can proclaim that which we have heard and seen ourselves. And as we encourage each other and build up one another, this is precisely what we must do.

As you get more involved in the life of the Church, you will see the power of Jesus Christ at work in your own life.

As you receive the Sacrament of Confession, you will experience the power of His forgiveness and love.

As you seek His wisdom in times of prayer, you will learn that the Lord gives it generously and freely (cf. James 1:5)

As you seek His strength and healing in times of sickness or sadness, you will know the mercies of God that are always with us.

As you celebrate Pascha and share in the spreading of the light, you will experience the hope of our own Resurrection on the last day.

As you observe the seasons of the Church calendar, and as you enter into the work of prayer and fasting, you will experience the presence of the Holy Spirit in every aspect of existence, no matter how small.

As you approach the Holy Chalice with hearts and bodies prepared for true Communion with the Lord, you will taste and see that the Lord is good.

This is what you have already seen and heard, and what you will witness again and again.

My beloved Young Adults:

Proclaim!

Proclaim to one another what you have already seen and heard in this conference, and what you will see and hear by the grace of God: so that you may have true communion, true κοινωνία, with one another; and even more, with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.

May the Lord bless you always and forevermore!

- Source: [goarch.org](http://goarch.org)