

03/09/2019

Address of His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America at the Anniversary Luncheon Celebration of the Church of Serbia



Saint Sava Serbian Orthodox Church
San Gabriel, California

September 1, 2019

Your Eminence Metropolitan Joseph,
Your Grace, Bishop Maxim,
Beloved Brother Hierarchs,
Reverend Clergy,
Beloved Faithful in the Lord,

I convey to all of you the heartfelt greetings and blessings of His All-Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. The people of Serbia—and the Orthodox Church of Serbia—are very dear to His All-Holiness. There has been a special bond of brotherhood between the Serbian Orthodox and the Greek Orthodox

communities throughout these many years. On an occasion such as this, the words of the Psalmist come immediately to mind (Psalm 132/133:1)— Ἰδοὺ δὴ τί καλὸν ἢ τί τερπνόν, ἀλλ' ἢ τὸ κατοικεῖν ἀδελφοὺς ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό; “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”

We rejoice in the long and close relationship between the Mother Church of Constantinople and the Patriarchate of Serbia. Over the centuries, the Ecumenical Patriarchate recognized the strength and maturity of the Serbian churches. In light of this, the Church of Constantinople granted the Church of Serbia first autonomy, and then autocephaly. So it was that in the year 1219, in the cathedral of Nicaea, Ecumenical Patriarch Manuel consecrated as the first Archbishop of the Serbians a monk, whom we now know as Saint Sava the Enlightener.

The independence and maturity of the Church of Serbia have been proven time and again through the centuries. A recent demonstration came in 2016, at the Great and Holy Council of Crete. The Church of Serbia honored her commitments to the Orthodox world, participating fully and whole-heartedly in the work of that important Pan-Orthodox Council. His All-Holiness extends grateful congratulations to His Beatitude, Patriarch Irinej and to all the hierarchy of the Church of Serbia for their brotherly dedication and faithfulness. Truly, it is good and pleasant—and spiritually beneficial—for brethren to dwell together in unity!

This unity has been manifested in many ways through the years. We know that it is common for the people of Serbia to go to Greece for their academic study, and likewise for the Greeks to enroll at the universities of Serbia. The people of Greece and Serbia have historically had strong diplomatic relationships as well. Many times they have been brothers in arms, as during the revolution against the Ottoman Empire, a revolution that restored freedom of religion to many parts of the Balkans. More recently, the Hellenic Republic supported the Serbian people in their conflicts and sufferings in the 1990s, following the breakup of Yugoslavia. The bond of brotherhood between Greeks and Serbs has been deep and genuine.

Over the past 800 years, the Serbian people have served the Lord Jesus Christ bravely. Through many challenges and difficulties, the Church of Serbia and her Patriarchs have fought the good faith, run the race, and kept the faith pure and undefiled (cf. 2 Timothy 4:7). In this world, better brothers and sisters can hardly be found than we have in the Serbian people. We pray that our good God would be pleased to grant us to “dwell together in unity” for many years to come, until the Lord Himself returns.

Through the intercessions of the Most-Holy Mother of God, and of Saint Sava the Enlightener of the Serbian people, and of all the saints: May our brotherly love and cooperation continue and grow; for the glory of God and for the building up of the Church.

May the Lord bless your celebrations this day and forever! Amen.

- Source: goarch.org