

24/07/2025

## **Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew's remarks on last night of pilgrimage**



Again, with my poor English, a few words... thank you very much for inviting me to this lovely dinner offered in my honor. I am grateful to all of you, above all, to His Eminence and to His Eminence, both my dear brothers in Christ and I sincerely tell you that your visit in the midst of summer, brought a breeze for all of us, metaphorically and essentially.

Thank you for coming, and I consider this pilgrimage of yours as one of the many to follow under the leadership of His Eminence Elpidophoros, something which reminds me of similar events under the late Archbishop Iakovos. He used to come quite often to this city when my late, great predecessor Patriarch Athenagoras was in power, in the administration of the church. And Iakovos used to bring with him many talented people from America. I remember when I was student in Halki this group around Iakovos received the offikion in the Chapel of the Holy Trinity in Halki, in the presence of the late Patriarch Athenagoras.

I read what His Holiness, Pope Leo the 14th, said to you during the audience you had in the Vatican. He said to my brother, Archbishop Elpidophoros, that his name is bearer of hope.

When I ordained him several years ago to the diaconate, I chose the name Elpidophoros, not simply because Martyr Elpidophoros is one of the five martyrs we celebrate on the second of November, and second of November is the day of my enthronement as Patriarch.

But I did choose this name for him because I knew his qualities, his talents, which he put to the service of the church since the very beginning, until he reached the glorious position of the Archbishop of America.

He is really “bearer of hope”. Because we were convinced, we elected him unanimously, and we appointed him to come to the new world, the United States, to shepherd our beloved Omogenia. And of course, we were not, we are not never disappointed, on the contrary, you are lucky to have such an archpastor.

In these days, I read, when I have just a short time, a short free time, I read the book of the late Pope Francis, his autobiography, translated in Greek, something which is easier. The title of the book is Hope. The late Pope used to say that we are all, especially this year, when we celebrate Nicaea, we are pilgrims of hope.

Our prayers and our wishes for you to be always messengers of hope, will accompany you as you return to the states tomorrow. I’m looking forward to meeting with at least some of you once again in September, when I shall have the occasion, the privilege, the joy, the honor, to come once again in my life, to the United States to see my spiritual children, some of you, in your homeland where you have accomplished so many things. I congratulate, I commend you, because you give us the possibility to be proud of you.

I greet my Roman Catholic brothers here, present under His Eminence, Cardinal Tobin. Their presence, as I said in the Phanar, brings me back to the ‘60s, when I was a student at the Pontifical University in Rome. Since I have close relations with the Roman Catholic brothers and sisters, I returned to Rome as Metropolitan, as Patriarch in any times.

I met and I collaborated with the last Popes, John Paul the Second, Benedict Francis, and already twice with Pope Leo XIV. I feel so close to them, I hope they don’t consider me as a foreigner, but as a member of the wider Christian family,

We have much to perform, to do together, east and west, Rome and Europe. The anniversary of the Council of Niceas, the First Ecumenical Council in the history of Christianity can be and must be, a milestone from which we can start a new era, a new period of collaboration.

We celebrate this year in the month of December, the anniversary of the lifting of the anathemas between Rome and Constantinople. I was a student when the solemn act of the lifting anathema took place at the Basilica, St Peter’s Basilica in Rome. The same day, a similar event, a celebration, took place in our Patriarchal Cathedral in the Phanar, under Patriarch Athenagoras. These are historical moments, as it was the meeting between Athenagoras and Paul VI in Jerusalem in January ‘64. Fifty years later, when I attended the enthronement of the late Pope Francis, I proposed to him to go together to Jerusalem the next year, in 2014, to

celebrate, to commemorate, to remember, the 50th anniversary of the historic meeting of our predecessors, Paul VI and Athenagoras. He did accept immediately, so in May 2014, one year after his election as Bishop of Rome, we were in Jerusalem in front of the tomb of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying for the peace in the world and for unity of the divided Christians.

I attended his funeral. I prayed with millions and millions of Roman Catholic brothers and sisters around the globe. And the day after the enthronement of the new Pope, I visited his tomb at the Basilica Santa Maria Maggiore, and I said prayers and I thanked him for his love for the Orthodox Church, especially the church of Constantinople, and I promised him to continue our collaboration with his successor, Leo XIV.

Now I conclude with something I remember from my previous visits to the States. Many of you, if not all of you, remember the late Michael Jaharis. Mr. Jaharis attended and participated in a dinner which was prolonged with much discussion and many toasts, as it is usual in the United States, and when he was called to the floor to say a few words, it was already after midnight. He started, saying I prefer dinners which are concluded the same day they begin. Thank you very much.

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