

15/09/2019

## **His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America presided at the Vespers of the Feast of the Holy Cross at Holy Cross Chapel, Brookline, Ma.**



On September 13th, 2019, His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America presided at the Vespers of the Feast of the Holy Cross at Holy Cross Chapel, Brookline, Ma. At the conclusion of the vespers service, His Eminence bestowed the “raso” (or cassock) on the seniors in the School of Theology during the service of the “rasoforia.”

**Homily**

**of His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America  
Great Vespers of the Exaltation  
of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross  
and Stavrophoria and Rassophoria of the Seminarians**

**Chapel of the Holy Cross  
Hellenic College/Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology  
Brookline, Massachusetts**

**September 13, 2019**

My Beloved Students of our precious *Scholi*,

The Lord said, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (Matthew 16:24). In these words is a *twofold* invitation.

First, we hear a call to follow the Lord along the path of struggle and pain. Christ suffered for our sake, in body, soul, and spirit, because “love bears all things” and “endures all things” (1 Corinthians 13:7). In whatever ways we serve the Church in days ahead, we will likewise endure stresses and challenges, disappointments and difficulties.

“The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few” (Luke 10:2). In Church life, there is much to be done, always. There are never enough hours in the day, ever. As clergy and as laity, we must often put aside our own will. Out of love for Christ and His people, we bear all things and endure all things. These sufferings are summed up in the image of the Cross. Thus, the Lord commands us: to deny ourselves, to take up our cross, and to follow Him.

But there is a second invitation in these words. For the Cross is also an image of *triumph*.

Through the Cross, Christ canceled the debt of human transgression (Colossians 2:14).

Through the Cross, Christ disarmed the powers of darkness (Colossians 2:15).

Through the Cross, Christ was lifted up and so drew all people to Himself (John 12:32).

The Cross is a symbol of ultimate victory over sin and death and the Devil. No human achievement can compare to the Cross. Saint Paul declares, “God forbid that I should glory, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Galatians 6:14).

Nothing in his life could compare to the triumph of the Cross. He counted his own ambitions as rubbish (Philippians 3:8); he put aside every former aspiration as irrelevant. To know and to serve Christ was enough for him. In this way, the great Apostle denied himself, took up his cross, and followed in the triumph of Jesus Christ.

My beloved Seminarians:

Today you will receive your own cross to wear and to cherish. Wear it with honor, with courage, with a sense of self-denial. Taking up the Cross, you accept the invitation to strive, to struggle, and to suffer for the sake of the Lord and His Church. And you also accept the call to take part in His triumph, and to have no other glory or boast or ambition in life, than the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

May the Lord grant you many years of fruitful service in His Kingdom, now and forever!

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the beloved and respected hierarchs who have joined us in prayer this evening. As president of this sacred institution, Metropolitan Methodios of Boston has breathed new life into our school. For his inspired leadership we give thanksgiving and glory to God. Bishop Ilia of Philomelion has been intricately involved for many years and through many roles at our beloved *Scholi*, and for this we express our gratitude. Bishop John has also been a mentor and a supportive figure that many students look to for guidance as a true pastor of our Church.

May God grant each of you many years of continued health and strength! Amen.