

V. Rev. Arch. Stephanos enthroned as the Holy Monastery of Saint Nektarios's new abbot



ROSCOE, NY – His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America presided over the Divine Liturgy and the Enthronement of the Very Reverend Archimandrite Stephanos as Abbot and Elder of the Holy Monastery of Saint Nektarios in Roscoe, New York, opening a new chapter for the monastery and marking a significant moment for Orthodox monasticism in the United States.

The Archbishop was joined by His Eminence Metropolitan Savas of Pittsburgh, His Grace Bishop Athenagoras of Nazianzos, and His Grace Bishop Nektarios of Diokleia. Also present were numerous abbots, abbesses, monks, and nuns from monasteries throughout the United States and Canada, together with clergy,

pilgrims, benefactors, and faithful.



The two days of prayer and celebration unfolded within the joy of the Feast of the Translation of the Holy Relics of Saint Nektarios the Wonderworker, the heavenly patron and protector of the Monastery. The feast was marked by a solemn Vigil, during which Great Vespers and Orthros were celebrated. The divine services were adorned by the beautiful chanting of the monastic choirs, whose prayerful voices filled the katholikon and gave expression to the profound spiritual character of the occasion. Thus, the tonsure and enthronement of the new Abbot were embraced by the liturgical life of the Church and placed beneath the intercessions of Saint Nektarios, whose presence and protection have accompanied the Monastery throughout its life and ministry.

The brotherhood of Saint Nektarios elected Archimandrite Stephanos to succeed its founder and first Abbot, the ever-memorable Elder Joseph, who fell asleep in the Lord earlier this year. The election carries profound meaning within the life of a monastic brotherhood. Every monk who entered Saint Nektarios Monastery had personally received Elder Joseph as his Abbot and spiritual father, entrusting to him his spiritual life and obedience. Following his repose, and after a period of mourning, prayer, and discernment, the fathers chose Father Stephanos as the one to whom they would now entrust that same spiritual care and obedience.

> Previously: Archbishop Elpidophoros presides over funeral for Archimandrite Joseph of St. Nektarios Monastery

The events surrounding the enthronement began on Wednesday, September 2, when Archbishop Elpidophoros tonsured Fr. Stephanos to the Great and Angelic Schema, the fullness of the monastic profession in the Orthodox Church. The Great Schema expresses the monastic's complete dedication to Christ through prayer, obedience, repentance, and ascetic struggle, together with a renewed embrace of the Cross at the heart of the monastic vocation.

Its celebration immediately before the enthronement carried particular significance: before Fr. Stephanos received the obedience of his brotherhood and responsibility for its spiritual care, he first renewed his own offering and obedience to Christ. The service also marked the first time in the history of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America that an Archbishop of America presided over a tonsure to the Great and Angelic Schema.



The enthronement represents an important point of transition for the monasteries established under the spiritual guidance of the ever-memorable Elder Ephraim of Arizona. Elder Ephraim contributed profoundly to the growth of Orthodox monasticism throughout North America, establishing monasteries and appointing the first generation of Abbots and Abbesses entrusted with their spiritual direction.

Elder Joseph was among that generation. He founded Saint Nektarios Monastery in 1999 and served as its first Abbot, carrying with him the spiritual inheritance of Mount Athos. His ministry was devoted to establishing the monastery and forming its brotherhood, while offering prayer, Confession, spiritual counsel, and consolation to the countless faithful who came to its doors.

With the election of Fr. Stephanos, the monastery now enters a new generation of spiritual leadership while remaining firmly rooted in the inheritance it received. As Archbishop Elpidophoros observed in his remarks, “The first generation planted. Now another generation is called to cultivate.”

Addressing the newly-enthroned Abbot, His Eminence emphasized the spiritual weight of the brotherhood’s choice.

“By their vote, they have not simply chosen someone to occupy the Abbot’s throne,” the Archbishop said. “They have said to you: ‘Be our Elder. Be our spiritual father. Guide us. Correct us. Pray for us. Walk before us on the road that leads to Christ.’ They have freely chosen to place their obedience in your hands.”

In his own remarks, Fr. Stephanos spoke with particular gratitude of the relationship between the monastery and the Archbishop, emphasizing that Orthodox monastic life is never separated from the canonical and sacramental life of the Church.

“A monastery is not outside the Church. It is within the Church,” Fr. Stephanos said. “It is the heart within the body of the Church, and the heart cannot live separated from the body.”

Addressing Archbishop Elpidophoros directly, the new Abbot noted the particular significance of receiving the blessing of a hierarch who himself has known the responsibilities of monastic leadership through his former service as Abbot of the Holy Trinity Monastery of Halki.

“You served as the Abbot at the Holy Monastery of Holy Trinity in Halki; you know what it means to carry a brotherhood in your heart,” Fr. Stephanos said, thanking His Eminence for his paternal care of Saint Nektarios Monastery, his pastoral presence, and the confidence he has placed in its brotherhood.

Fr. Stephanos further pledged that the monastery would continue to live faithfully within the canonical order of the Church, “with obedience, sincerity, and trust toward its canonical Shepherd,” adding: “Obedience is not a chain. It is freedom.

And ecclesiastical order does not restrict the monastery. It protects it.”

The Archbishop likewise emphasized that the continuity represented by the enthronement is not simply institutional, but deeply spiritual: the preservation of a living monastic inheritance within the life and order of the Church, passed from spiritual father to spiritual son and received anew by each generation.

His Eminence encouraged Fr. Stephanos and the brotherhood to carry forward the prayer, ascetical life, spiritual ministry, and work begun by Elder Joseph, trusting that their departed Elder’s prayers and blessing remain with them.

A particular emphasis of the Archbishop’s remarks was the monastery’s vocation to remain a place of spiritual refuge for those burdened by the pressures and restlessness of contemporary life.

“Let this monastery always be a refuge for the human person,” His Eminence said. “Let the pilgrim who enters Saint Nektarios feel that he has stepped out of the turbulence of the world and into a place where eternity has come a little closer.”

Fr. Stephanos echoed this understanding of the monastery’s mission, describing monasteries as “the spiritual lungs of the Church,” places where the prayer of the monastic community continues even when the world sleeps and where the invocation, “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me,” remains at the heart of monastic life.

He also spoke movingly of the spiritual inheritance entrusted to the brotherhood, from Saint Joseph the Hesychast, through Elder Ephraim of Arizona of blessed memory, and through the ever-memorable Elder Joseph, and expressed his desire not simply to occupy the place of his predecessor, but to continue his love for the brotherhood and his ministry to the faithful.

Turning directly to the fathers of Saint Nektarios, Fr. Stephanos asked them to help him remain first and foremost a monk and a servant of his brothers. “I do not want to be above you,” he said. “I want to be with you and, if God gives me strength, to be before you only when it is necessary to carry the cross first.”

The gathering of hierarchs, monastic superiors, monastics, clergy, spiritual children, and faithful from throughout the United States and Canada reflected the significance of the occasion for Saint Nektarios Monastery and for the wider Church.

At the conclusion of his remarks, Archbishop Elpidophoros charged the new Abbot:

“Receive this brotherhood. Become their father. Guard their unity. Carry their

burdens. Open the doors of this monastery to the weary. Preserve the inheritance you have received. And lead this sacred community, not toward yourself, not simply toward the memory of any human person, however holy or beloved, but always and only toward Christ,” His Eminence said.

Taken together, the Great Schema tonsure and the enthronement expressed both continuity and renewal: the personal offering of a monk more completely to Christ, the entrusting of a brotherhood to its new spiritual father, and the continuation of a monastic inheritance lived faithfully within the canonical life of the Church.

The celebration concluded with the joyful proclamation: Αἱ ἰοὺς! He is Worthy!

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