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St. Photios National Shrine Welcomes Archbishop Elpidophoros of America



SAINT AUGUSTINE, Fla. – The Saint Photios Greek Orthodox National Shrine in St. Augustine welcomed His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America during the weekend of February 8-9, 2020 for a series of meetings and events that were planned around the annual board of directors meeting.

On hand to welcome the Archbishop, as well as Metropolitan Alexios of Atlanta was His Grace, Bishop Demetrios of Mokissos, the Hierarchal Proistamenos of the St. Photios Greek Orthodox National Shrine. It was the first pastoral visit of His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros, who also serves as the Chairman of the St. Photios National Shrine Foundation.

Archbishop Elpidophoros called St. Photios Shrine, “a humble palace ‘of the memory of love and consolation’ (Bibliotheca 545:18-19). It is a place where we can remember our ancestors – whomever they may be, who came to these blessed shores in search of a better life and brought their precious Orthodox Christian Faith

with them. Thus, the Shrine is also a symbol of the calling of the Church to bring the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ to all people, even to the uttermost ends of the earth (Acts 1:8), just as our fathers and mothers brought the Orthodox Faith to America."

The weekend included the St. Photios Foundation trustees' annual meeting, with representation from every Metropolis of the Archdiocese — a first since 2012 – where numerous new initiatives were announced about the further promotion of the Shrine as a valuable institution of the Archdiocese.

The Shrine's new exhibition was also inaugurated with the presence of Aliki Tsirgialou, Curator of the Benaki Museum's photography collection. The exhibition features stunning images of Mt Athos by acclaimed Greek photographer Costas Balafas and will remain on display for one year.

A special hierarchical vespers service was held in the chapel of St Photios Shrine with Archbishop Elpidophoros officiating, while Divine Liturgy was celebrated at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in St Augustine with hundreds of faithful in attendance from throughout the nation, including a delegation from the Chicago Metropolis who came to support the new ministry of Bishop Demetrios.

The weekend concluded with a festive lunch on Sunday, February 9 with the Honorable Tracy Upchurch, Mayor of St Augustine, Consul General of Greece Dimitrios Sparos and numerous other dignitaries in attendance.

The Shrine's executive director Polly Maouris Hillier was recognized for her fifteen years of service and the Archbishop conferred the Medal of St. Paul upon Elaine Tissura from Atlanta for her decades-long service to the church. This is highest honor the Archdiocese bestows upon a lay person and Mrs. Tissura's entire family was on hand to watch the celebration.

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