

12/06/2020

His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros Homily on the Feast Day of Saint Bartholomew



Saint Barbara Greek Orthodox Church

New York, New York

Beloved Faithful,

It is a great joy for me to be with you today, as we celebrate together the Feast-day of our spiritual father, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. For many years, I enjoyed this day in the Queen of Cities, witnessing the crowds of dignitaries and well-wishers who streamed into the Phanar to convey their best wishes and salutations to His All-Holiness.

This year, I am very pleased to celebrate this occasion for the first time as your Archbishop in this beautiful Church of Saint Barbara here in New York City. Even though we are an ocean away from the Golden Horn, and the Patriarchate is still under the restrictions caused by the pandemic, we are united to our spiritual father through the celebration of the Divine Service, through our spiritual elevation into

the Heavenly Realm, where we all gather mystically around the Throne of God.

The service of this day, was composed by the late, renown Hymnographer of the Holy and Great Church of Christ, the Monk Γεράσιμος ὁ Μικραγιαννανίτης of the Holy Mountain Athos. This spiritual master of song and poem, who composed over two thousand works, bears witness to the greatness of the Ecumenical Patriarch, whose authority overshadows the Holy Mountain like the protecting wings of an eagle.



You see, we can never separate spiritual authority from the person who wields that authority. This is the reason why the people followed our Lord Jesus Christ during his earthly ministry.[*] And it is why the whole world looks to Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew for wisdom and leadership – whether in matters of Orthodoxy, Ecumenism, Interfaith relations, Environmentalism, or the pursuit of human rights and religious freedom for all people. He is a genuine leader who speaks from conviction and courage.

Therefore, we can hear how the Lord's words in the Gospel reading of this day speak about our Patriarch, when He said to His Disciples (Bartholomew among them):

“Behold, I grant you authority to trample upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the might of the enemy, and nothing shall ever harm you.”[†]

In the Church, it is wrong to think you have power because of your position. Power does not make you powerful. It makes you arrogant.

Our Patriarch occupies the highest position in world Orthodoxy, and even though he shepherds a very small local flock, it is not power he wields, but authority. He

speaks with authority, as the Lord spoke with authority, because he is a true servant of the People of God and the people of the world.

There are many who see the position of our Patriarchate as being in a condition of weakness: because we are not so many in our City; because we live in a majority Muslim country; because of the past. But these are the mere exigencies of history. They do not define us.

Because I tell you this: there is no fear in the sacred person of our Ecumenical Patriarch, only bravery and moral integrity. For “there is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.”[‡] He understands the purely spiritual ministry of the Church of Constantinople, and that it is a diakonia not only to Orthodoxy, but to the world.

For this alone, we are beyond grateful to God for the gift of the Patriarchal Ministry of His All-Holiness. Later today, at the Doxology in his honor, I will have more to say, but the truth is, I could speak for many hours – even days, on the multitude of virtues, talents, and the magnificent deeds of our Ecumenical Patriarch. But I shall leave some for later, and encourage all of you to seek out the vast treasure-house of his writings, speeches, homilies, encyclicals, and all the details of his extraordinary Patriarchal Ministry which is now nearing thirty years!

But if you do not have the time, I shall make it easy for you. Know this. Whether you are oldest or the youngest, the richest or the poorest, the smartest or the simplest, the best or the worst – he loves each and every one of you as his own precious child. And everything he faces, he does for you.

May the Lord our God grant unto His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, Archbishop of Constantinople and New Rome, many more years of health, prosperity, and every spiritual blessing!

Εἰς Πολλά ἼΕτη!

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