

23/06/2020

His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros Ἀντιφώνησις On the Occasion of the Anniversary of His Enthronement



June 22, 2020

Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Cathedral

New York, New York

Beloved Father Andreas, Chancellor of our Holy Archdiocese of America

Your Grace(s) and beloved Clergy,

Dear Faithful,

I glorify God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit for allowing me to be here today, one year from my enthronement as Archbishop of America, to be here with you so that I may be your servant, your brother, and your friend.

And I give abundant thanks to God Almighty for the gift of this ministry from the hands of the spiritual father of us all, His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch

Bartholomew, and the Holy and Sacred Synod that surrounds his sacred person; for their trust, their confidence, and in all things, their wise counsel.

I give thanks to my brother Hierarchs, the Metropolitans of the Holy Eparchial Synod, who have embraced me as their Presiding Archbishop.

I give thanks to all of my co-workers throughout the institutions of the Archdiocese, who have demonstrated heroic dedication to their ministries and the mission of the Church, especially through this time of the pandemic.

I give thanks for the clergy, and the presbyteres and their families who sacrifice so much for the work of Christ. It has been one of my great joys in this first year to be able to speak directly to many hundreds of them, connecting through the use of technology. Hearing their concerns has been enormously helpful to my archpastoral ministry.

I give thanks to the Faithful from coast to coast, who have shown extraordinary faith through the difficult days of the pandemic. Their generosity has not flagged. Their devotion has not waned. Indeed, their love for the Church and the Orthodox Faith of Christ has grown over these difficult months.

To serve the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America on behalf of the Mother Church of Constantinople is the greatest honor of my life.

Therefore, it is not for me to accept praises today, for all praise belongs to the Father of Lights from Whom every blessing flows.

It is not for me to receive gratitude, because my duty, my obligation, is to serve, and not be served, even as the Lord Jesus said.[*]

It is I who am grateful for your love, and for your generous words.

And in the spirit of brevity, I will close now with something I said one year ago in this very place:

Ἐτοίμη ἡ καρδιά μου ὁ Θεός, Ἐτοίμη ἡ καρδιά μου!

Ready is my heart, O God, ready is my heart! [†]

Truly, my heart is as ready now as it was then, and in fact is even more prepared to embrace the brokenhearted, comfort the wounded, encourage the downtrodden, and raise up those most in need.

Our ministry is not agenda-driven, but is driven by a love for God and for every

human person made in His image, according to His likeness.

For every bishop, whatever their responsibility in the Church might be, the only reason to wear a crown is so that we may reverently and worshipfully cast it before the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.[‡]

We cast it in recognition of the greatness of God, and of the greatness of His love for all humanity.

We cast it to acknowledge our role as servants, graced to be elevated into this ministry of the High Priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ, but conscious that this diakonia is one of service to others first and foremost.

We cast our crown before the Lord of Glory because we know that it is only through sacrificial love – the love that costs us dearly in our hearts – that we are deemed worthy to participate in the mystical ministry of redemption through the small gifts we bring to the Body of Christ.

As I stand here and think of all the times in my ecclesial life that I have heard the acclamation, Αἱ Οἱ Σ, as I ascended the ranks of the priesthood, I am struck by the moment itself. We do not proclaim the ordained person Αἱ Οἱ Σ until they begin to be robed in the vestments of their dignity. Only as they put on Christ, as we all do in Holy Baptism, are they acclaimed Αἱ Οἱ Σ.

Therefore, my beloved, let us join our voices with that of the Revelator of Patmos, the Beloved Disciple, and in thanksgiving for all our blessings – this day and every day – cry aloud:

Ἄξιός εἰ, ὁ Κύριος καὶ Θεὸς ἡμῶν,

λαβεῖν τὴν δόξαν καὶ τὴν τιμὴν καὶ τὴν δύναμιν,

ὅτι σὺ ἔκτισας τὰ πάντα,

καὶ διὰ τὸ θέλημά σου ἦσαν καὶ ἐκτίσθησαν.

Worthy are You, O Lord,

to receive glory, honor, and power,

for You fashioned everything that is,

and by Your will everything exists and has been created![\$]

Amen!

[*] Cf. Matthew 20:28.

[†] Psalm 57:7 (LXX).

[‡] Cf. Revelation 4:10.

[\$] Revelation 4:11.

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