

Thirty Thousand celebrate Epiphany in Tarpon Springs, Florida (VIDEOS)



Tarpon Springs, Fla. – Jan 6, 2019 – The Feast of Epiphany is the most important day for this city of the Tampa Bay area, known around the country and the world, as “Epiphany City.” His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of America, once again presided at the annual 113th celebration of Theophany (Epiphany), the Hierarchal Divine Liturgy, the the Great Blessing Service of the Waters and the Dive for the Cross in Spring Bayou, while some thirty thousand pilgrims and visitors attended the festivities, according to estimates from the local authorities.

His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios, Primate of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, following the reading of the gospel from a stage overlooking the Bayou waters tossed the wooden Holy Cross in the water and fifty-eight teenage young men from the Greek Orthodox parishes and communities of the area dove to retrieve it. Ilias Skandaliaris of Tarpon, 17-years-old, quickly emerged holding the Cross as high as he could.

Fifteen-year-old Stella Billirakis, granddaughter of Greek American Congressman Michael Billirakis released a white dove representing the Holy Spirit that flew over the Bayou. Stella was chosen among her peers, and she is following the family legacy of her grandmother Evelyn, who was the dove girl 62 years ago.

In the morning of the Feast, Archbishop Demetrios presided over the Hierarchal Divine Liturgy in the historic Cathedral of Saint Nicholas with concelebrants His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios of Atlanta, His Grace Bishop Sevastianos of Zela and His Grace Bishop Dimitrios of Xanthos. They were assisted by the dean of the Cathedral Fr. Athanasios Haros, the priests Sampson Kasapakis and Theofanis Katsiklis and other clergymen of the area.

The President of the local AHEPA chapter George Washington #16 Tim Keflas and AHEPA's Supreme Secretary George Horiatis welcomed Archbishop Demetrios to the customary dinner of the organization the previous evening, Saturday January 5.