

10/09/2020

## **HAH Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew Greets the 45th Clergy-Laity Congress - Keynote of Archbishop Elpidophoros**



New York, NY – His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew sent virtual greetings to the 45th Clergy-Laity Congress, as it commenced its work for the first time in a virtual setting. His All-Holiness greeted the over 1,100 Delegates, in part, with the following exhortation (Video Link: <https://youtu.be/SyOECc-1lI>).

“With the assent of God, the Giver of all good things, the 45th Clergy-Laity Congress of this great Eparchy of our Ecumenical Throne, the united Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, takes place for the first time virtually, as a result of the difficult circumstances that the pandemic of the novel coronavirus Covid-19 continue to create. As we convey the commendation of the Mother Church and our Patriarchal blessing to all of you, we congratulate you for continuing this beautiful tradition, which, for many decades now, has strengthened the good witness of the Church in light of the demands and challenges of the times, thereby securing the broad participation of the people of God in the Church affairs, the exchange of opinions in a spirit of love and concord, as well as the reaching of decisions

beneficial for the mission of the Church.”

His All-Holiness noted most eloquently the necessity for the Church’s engagement with the world:

“The contemporary world and its culture is not some ‘sinful Nineveh,’ whose punishment and destruction by God are desired by those overcome by the ‘Jonah syndrome,’ who believe they are the ‘chosen ones’ in the “household of the father,” but have no connection to the contemporary reality, no sensitivity for the adventures of human freedom, and no sharing in the pain of the victims of violence, injustice, and discrimination. Our objective should be a Christian witness and action in the world, which implies engagement and not disengagement, praxis and not just theoria, acceptance and not just rejection, dialogue and not just barren disputation.”

In his Keynote Address, focused on the theme of the Congress, “... the greatest of these is love” (I Corinthians 13:13, Archbishop Elpidophoros stated (Video Link: <https://youtu.be/6VpUCTY8pb8>)

“So we commence, Beloved in the Lord, with the one virtue, the one grace, the one charisma that is truly needful – ἀγάπη! Everything we want to do in the life of our Ἐκκλησία is only justified, and indeed, is only perfected, by love. ... Imagine a world where instead of objectifying and opposing others, we simply loved them, and allowed the transformative love of God to fill their hearts. This, my beloved friends, is faith in action, because we continue to believe that we can become better people, even our best selves in Christ. ... In the Light of Christ, the future is always bright. Even in the midst of a global pandemic that has changed our world and our societies, we have found ways to live our life as Ἐκκλησία. We have been called out, called out to lives of service and mission to one another and to the world.”

The 45th Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Clergy-Laity Congress continues this evening with a special Pension Webinar, and will conclude on Thursday, September 10th, with the customary Plenary on the afternoon of the 10th.

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