

27/10/2020

## His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America Homily at the Great Vespers of Saint Demetrios the Myrrh-Streamer



Saint Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church

Merrick, New York

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Ὡ τοῦ παραδόξου θαύματος! O most glorious wonder!

With this poetic exclamation, we began our hymns of praise to your Patron Saint, the Great-Martyr and Myrrh-Streamer Demetrios. His Feast and his name are praised and praiseworthy around the world for all pious and Orthodox Christians. His martyrdom is a paradigm of virtue and courage. And his memory, like that of all the righteous from everlasting, is treasured in the liturgical cycle of the Church.

As we read in the Second Prophecy:

Ἐξέστη ὁ οὐρανὸς ἐπὶ τούτῳ καὶ ἔφριξεν ἐπὶ πλεῖον σφόδρα.

Heaven was amazed because of him, and exceedingly astonished!

And how could the Heavens not be struck with perplexity and wonder, at the sight of this Champion of God enduring so many torments for the sake of his Creator. Just as we chant on Holy and Great Friday:

Πᾶσα ἡ Κτίσις, ἡλλοιοῦτο φόβῳ, θεωροῦσά σε, ἐν σταυρῷ κρεμᾶμενον Χριστέ....

All creation was changed by fear and dread, when it saw You, O Christ, crucified upon the Cross....

Just as the Passion – the Sufferings – of the Lord were too much for Creation to behold, so also is the ‘Holy Week’ of Saint Demetrios terrible to bear, for he suffered with His Christ. His side was pierced by many spears before he died, and so we chanted:

Ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ λογχευθεὶς, ὁ τρισμάκαρ Δημήτριος....

For Christ, you were pierced, O Thrice-blesséd Demetrios....

Indeed, my beloved Christians, Saint Demetrios was stabbed while yet alive, unlike the Lord whose side was pierced as proof of His death. As the Evangelist John tells us of this moment at the foot of the Cross:

But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Rather, one of the soldiers stabbed His side with a lance, and there was an instant outpouring of blood and water.

The blood and the water that come forth from the womb of our mothers, when we are born into this world, symbolize the Holy Mysteries of Eucharist and Baptism, by which we are re-born into the next.

But Saint Demetrios endured this piercing of his flesh while he was yet alive. Why? Because from his living faith in Christ, his loving faith in the Lord, he was shown forth to be a wellspring of healings for the world.

That is why we gather this evening in this beautiful Church dedicated to his name, a Church that our beloved and sacred Spiritual Father, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, presided at, on his last Apostolic Visitation of the United States in 2009.

ou are blessed by the Great-Martyr Demetrios, and you were blessed by the footsteps of His All-Holiness in your midst. The former is your Heavenly intercessor;

the latter is your fervent intercessor upon this good earth.

You all must know that our Patriarch holds a special place in his heart and mind for your Patron Saint, because his baptismal name is Dimitrios. Thus, your blessing on this day has many layers, because the grace of Saint Demetrios comes upon you with different waves from the ocean of the Divine Spirit, and it washes over your community with healing and peace.

My beloved Christians:

We live in difficult times. The pandemic has yet to be overcome. We need the healing grace of Saint Demetrios now more than ever. His passion upon earth, in imitation of our Savior Jesus Christ, is a source of strength and cures for both body and soul. Let us cleave to him in these times and in every time, and find for ourselves and for our loved ones and families, the valor and fortitude to live our lives with faith, hope, and with love.

Ταῖς αὐτοῦ ἁγίαις πρεσβείαις, ὁ Θεὸς, ἐλέησον ἡμᾶς. Ἀμήν.

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