

27/10/2020

His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros - Address at the Ordination to the Diaconate of Deacon Demetrios Balidis



October 26, 2020

Saint Demetrios Greek Orthodox Cathedral

Astoria, New York

Beloved Deacon Demetrios,

On this Feastday of your Heavenly Patron, when we sing of him as “Τρισμάκαρ - Thrice-Blesséd,”[*] we can say the same of you. For today you ascend unto the Altar of God to join the ranks of the Presbyters of the Church, and you do it on a day of threefold blessing.

First, you enter the Priesthood on your Nameday, when the name of your Saint resounds throughout the Church. The special blessing of the Myrrh-Streamer

Demetrios fills the Church on this day of his sacred martyrdom.

Second, you bend both knees before the Altar in a Church – a Cathedral no less – which bears the name of the Great-Martyr himself. Here, in this place of particular dedication, you receive the grace of the Order of Melchizedek.

And third, your name resonates with the names of those celebrate this day, and above all with our Spiritual Father, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew Bartholomew, because his baptismal name is Dimitrios.

Together with all those assembled today, even the former Archbishop Demetrios who prays within the Altar, the good wishes and cries of “AXIOS” issue forth from your spiritual brothers and sisters who share your name and the blessing that comes with it.

It is truly a marvel that this name – a pagan name originally, has become so beloved to Christians around the world. “Demetrios” means, in Greek, “devoted or belonging to Demeter” who was an Olympian goddess of the harvest and agriculture. But it is Saint Demetrios who transforms this name into a Christian designation of courage in the face of evil, and love in the face of hate. Nevertheless, beloved Deacon, there is something to be learned from that ancient origin of the name.

For there is a deep and long association of Demeter with grain and food. And this speaks to the ministry upon which you embark today.

As a priest of the Most High God, you are called to offer the bread that is spoken of in the Didache, the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles:

Even as this broken bread was scattered over the hills, and was gathered together and became one, so let Your Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into Your kingdom; for Yours is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ forever.[†]

You are called to feed and nurture the People of God – not with earthly “food that perishes, but with the food that abides unto eternal life.” [‡]

As our Lord Jesus Christ said:

“Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you feed on the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Those who feed on My Flesh and drink My Blood possess eternal life, and I will raise them up at the Last Day. Indeed, My Flesh is truly a food that nourishes, and My Blood is truly a drink that quenches.

Those who feed on My Flesh and drink My Blood abide in Me and I in them. [§]

I ask all of you: Is there any more extraordinary saying of the Lord? Is there anything more radical?

You, beloved Deacon Demetrios, as a priest – you are called to live this experience with the People of God through the Holy and Divine Liturgy. Let it never become routine. Let it never be only a ritual. Let it never be a performance for which you merely play a part.

Remember what I say to you this day. At every Liturgy, whether you are in a great Cathedral such as this, or a simple village Parish – pray and celebrate every Liturgy of your priesthood:

as if it were your first Liturgy,

your last Liturgy,

your only Liturgy.

Through the prayers of Great-Martyr and Myrrh-Streamer Saint Demetrios, may you ever hold such a vision in your soul, and be the priest of God that He has called you to be. Amen!

[*]Sticheron of the Vespers of Saint Demetrios.

[†]The Didache, chapter 9.

[‡]John 6:27.

[§]John 6:53-56.

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