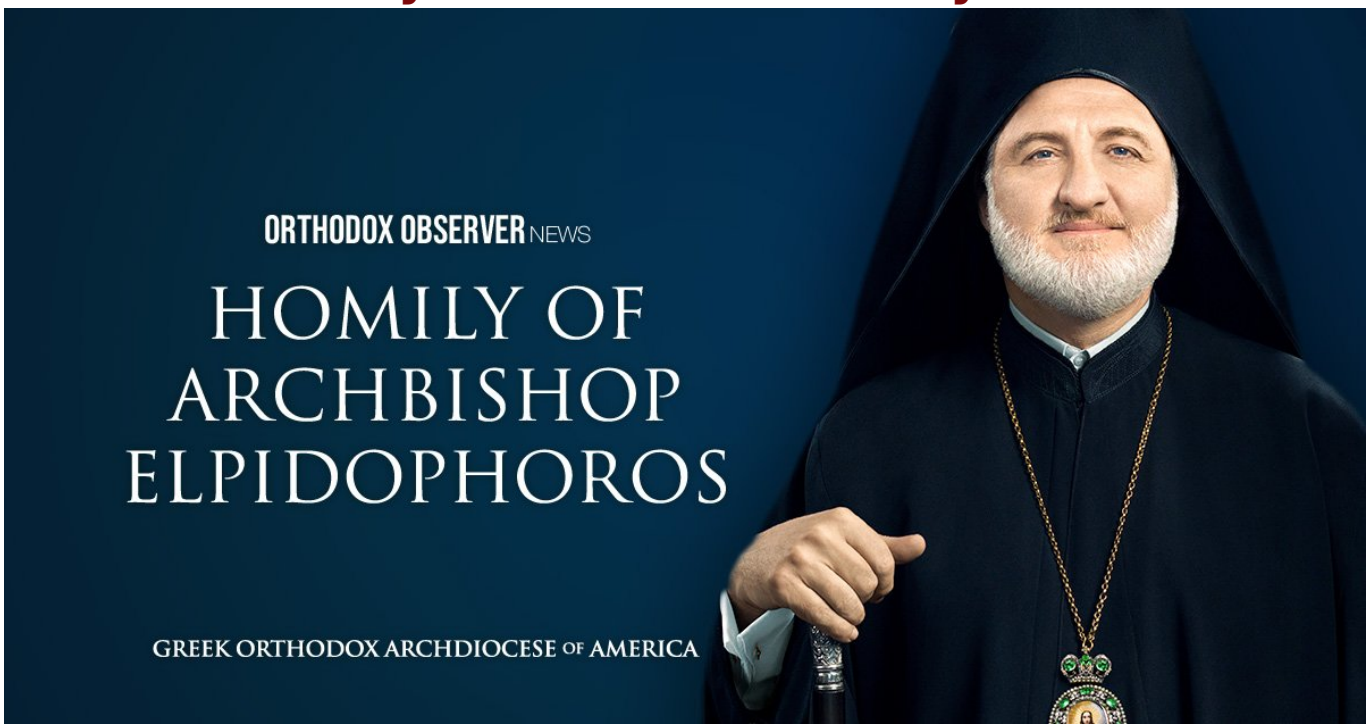
03/11/2020

His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America Homily on the Fifth Sunday of Saint Luke



Greek Orthodox Cathedral of Saint John the Theologian

Tenafly, New Jersey

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I am so very pleased to be with you for the Divine Liturgy today, especially in my capacity as Patriarchal Vicar for the eparchy of New Jersey. Praying with you in this magnificent Cathedral, that is dedicated to the Theologian and Evangelist John, is a memorable experience, which I shall treasure.

Today is the feast of the Anargyroi Kosmas and Damian, whose healing ministry was a result of their great love for our Lord Jesus Christ and their great love for their fellow human beings. And it is this “great love” that I will speak of with you today, for if the Divine Liturgy is anything, it is truly a Feast of Love.

I use the expression “great love” very purposely, because the English word love has become almost common. It is amazing to me that in the language of William Shakespeare, we seem to have a scarcity of words for love. “Charity” – a perfectly

wonderful word, has been reduced to meaning a check that you write to a non-profit to benefit those less fortunate than yourself. Thus, charity itself has become divorced from love.

In our rich and eloquent Greek language, we have many words for love, among them are: φιλία – "friendship," στοργή – "affection," ἔρως – "romance," and the word that is the definition of God in the words of your Patron Saint: ἀγάπη – the "great love" that God has for every living thing and His whole creation. For the Theologian says in his First Universal Epistle:

Ὁ Θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστίν. God is love.[*]

Could any theology be more simple? More plain? More clear?

A very well-known ascetic, who was a disciple of Saint John Chrysostom named Evagrios, and hailed from Pontus, once famously said:

"If you are a theologian, you will truly pray.

And if you pray truly, you are a theologian." [†]

But I think, as I stand in this Temple dedicated to the Theologian and Beloved Disciple John, that we could say it differently:

"If you are a theologian, you will truly love.

And if you love truly, you are a theologian."

Thus, my beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, you can all be theologians, if you really want to be.

In the Epistle that we read today, we hear the most praiseworthy definition of love that comes from the renowned chapter thirteen of Saint Paul's First Letter to the Church at Corinth. These marvelous words bear repeating:

Love is forbearing, full of goodness and kindness. Love does not envy; love does not boast; is not puffed up and does not behave unseemly. Love does not seek self-interest, does not become aggravated, does not keep score of wrongdoing. Love feels no joy at injustice, but rejoices in the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.[‡]

Here is the theology of the Church! Here is a seminary education for everyone! Here is the "one thing needful"[§] that fulfills all of the commandments in one commandment: Ἀγαπᾶτε ἀλλήλους – "Love one another." [**]

Beloved Christians, we call ourselves "Christians" because we are those who bear, not only the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, but because we act like our Lord Jesus Christ. And there is no action – whether mental, emotional, physical, or spiritual – that is more like the Lord, than if we manifest the "great love with which He loved us." [††]

Let us then, as we pray in every Divine Liturgy, "love one another that with oneness of mind we may confess Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one in essence and undivided." [‡‡]Amen.

[*] I John 4:8

[†] Treatise on Prayer, 61.

[‡] I Corinthians 13:4-8.

[§] Cf. Luke 10:42.

[**] John 13:34.

[††] Ephesians 2:4.

[‡‡] Ἀγαπήσωμεν ἀλλήλους, ἵνα ἐν ὁμονοίᾳ ὁμολογήσωμεν Πατέρα, Υἱὸν καὶ Ἅγιον Πνεῦμα, Τριάδα ὁμοούσιον καὶ ἀχώριστον.

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