15/11/2020

Address by His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America at the Ordination of Bishop-Elect Spyridon of Amastris

November 14, 2020
Greek Orthodox Church of the Holy Cross
Belmont, California

Your Eminence Archbishop Nikitas of Thyateira,
Your Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco,
My Beloved Brothers in the Holy Spirit,
Dear Clergy and Faithful of this Community of the Holy Cross,
Beloved Bishop-Elect of Amastris, Your Grace Spyridon,

My dear brother, today we gather in this Church of the Holy Cross, a Parish well known to you and served by your dear friend and collaborator, the late and ever-memorable Father Leonidas Contos. We gather before the Holy Cross of the Lord,

the place par excellence of sacrificial love, to receive your offering of service in the Holy High Priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

On Earth as it is in Heaven – thus we pray, and thus we believe that your beloved late Presvytera Chrisanthe joins with the Celestial Hosts and all those whose have gone before us to celebrate this moment. And with your children and grandchildren present today, to bear witness to this culmination of your lifetime of diakonia, we gather in this holy Synaxis to elevate you to the episcopal dignity.

Together with all the Saints, we offer fervent prayers for all those who have brought you before the Holy Altar this day, whether alive in this world or the next.
Beloved Bishop-Elect Spyridon, you were known for most of your life as Spencer, an Anglicized version of your Baptismal Name. But today, your name echoes that of the Great Bishop of Trimythous (Τριμυθούντος), who is the perfect icon of a pastor and a theologian. And you are both as well, an experienced shepherd of the Flock of Christ through your many decades of parish ministry, and you are a theologian who has worked to explicate the sacred texts of our Orthodox liturgical life for the access and the understanding of the Faithful.

Yes, you have been elected late in life, but let no one believe that it is too late, or that this is some kind of reward for your years of service. If I may exhort you with an Apostolic injunction, with one slight change:

Let no one despise your ‘seniority,’ but set for the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.
Indeed, like the younger Timothy to whom Saint Paul writes, we recognize the example that you have set throughout your life, and which you will continue to manifest as a Bishop of our Holy Orthodox Church. Your speech and conduct, your love, faith, and purity of life bear witness to your worthiness for the Office of a Hierarch in the Church.

I, for one, look very much forward to your continuing service in our Archdiocese and your new participation in the Assembly of Bishops. Here, I believe, you have a talent that must not be buried, but it should be shared with your brother Bishops. I speak of your theological talent.
We must continue to seek the best translations for all Orthodox in the United States, faithful to the Greek original, and translations that allow all Orthodox to worship ἐν ἑνὶ στόματι – “with one voice,” as we pray in every Divine Liturgy.

Bishop-Elect Spyridon, your vast experience and familiarity with the liturgical texts of the Church give you a distinct and enriched perspective that must be shared

with all. We know the tremendous value of the original Greek language; therefore, we must provide the very best translations!

In ascending to the throne of our Great High Priest Jesus Christ today, we all pray for your health – both of spirit and of body – that you may have many years of service yet to come.

Your See of Amastris, chosen for you by the Ecumenical Patriarch himself, is a most famous τόπος in the ancient world. This region was known as far back as the Iliad of Homer, and it resounds with your own ancestral roots. This connectivity is important for everyone to understand, because these Sees that were once the glory of the Church live on in the persons of the Bishops who bear their titles. You, as the Bishop of Amastris, bear within your office the entire history of this Church of ancient Pontus.

You are a living link to the Christian community that was there as early as the Second Century, as is attested by the Letter of Saint Dionysios of Corinth to the Bishop there, whose name was Palmas. In that letter, according to Eusebius, there was advice in regard to marriage and celibacy.
So here you are today, beloved brother, as one who has known the blessing of marriage and family, and as one who embraced celibacy. You can speak to both these holy states of Christian life; the two sides of the one coin of sanctification.
Bishop-Elect Spyridon:

Your life has been abundantly blessed by God, and has had its share of challenges, which by the grace of God, and by your love of the Church, you have overcome. I pray that your episcopacy is becomes the means of your sharing your many gifts with an even wider circle of the Faithful.
Thus, may your life and ministry attain the blessing uttered by the Holy Father we celebrated only yesterday, Saint John Chrysostom, the Archbishop of Constantinople:
Glory to God for all things!
Δόξα τῷ Θεῷ πάντων ἕνεκεν!
Ἀμήν.

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