

16/12/2020

Archbishop Elpidophoros of America Keynote Address to the Archdiocesan Council



Keynote Address to the Archdiocesan Council, New York City

December 15, 2020

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Mr. John Catsimatidis, Vice-Chair of this Archdiocesan Council,

Esteemed members of the Executive Committee and the Archdiocesan Council,

Distinguished Senators for Orthodoxy and Hellenism,

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ,

I express to each and every one of you my gratitude and respect for your service to our Holy Archdiocese, especially through this year of 2020 that is quickly coming to a close. I think it is fair to say that this year has been the most difficult in the history of the Archdiocese. We have been forced to face unprecedented challenges

in the present, even as we have been working diligently to ameliorate challenges from the past, all the while looking ahead to the bright future of our Church in this Nation. And the fact that we have been successful is a brilliant testament to the historic levels of cooperation and dedicated service that you have all given to this Eparchy of our Ecumenical Patriarchate, the First Throne of Orthodoxy. Again, my deepest thanks to all of you for your devotion and love for our Church.

Today, we welcome the new members to the Archdiocesan Council along with those who continue in this noble work and a very special vanguard of workers in the Vineyard of our Lord: the newly established Senators for Orthodoxy and Hellenism. The Senators possess an extraordinary depth of experience and institutional memory that is essential for the success of the Holy Archdiocese of America. They are most welcome and we look forward to continuing to benefit from the wealth of their expertise.

I want to note a few moments from this past year before I lay out some of the vision for the future.

Let us not forget that at the beginning of the pandemic, 45 million dollars was raised to rescue the Saint Nicholas Church and National Shrine at the World Trade Center, and that in the midst of the pandemic, construction re-started. This is no small accomplishment. Many and abiding thanks are due to the Friends of St. Nicholas for their generosity and leadership, and especially to Fr. Alexander Karloutsos for his crucial role in this sacred task.

Let us not forget that in the midst of this pandemic, Hellenic College and Holy Cross are on a more stable footing than they have been in decades. Yes, sacrifices have been made, but the School is functioning and not failing, and we have brought our accreditation back from the brink and maintained it through the crisis. President George Cantonis along with the Board of Trustees, the Administration and the Faculty have truly turned the tide at the School, and they deserve our gratitude and our appreciation.

Let us not forget that, in the midst of a pandemic that has had such extreme effects on the financial condition of society as a whole, and all religious and non-profit institutions, the Archdiocese has finally faced up to the condition of the Clergy Pension. We have become fully engaged in order to find solutions to this decades-old wound in the very heart of our clergy.

Let us not forget that, through the use of technology on a scale never before seen in our Church, we have found ways to communicate the Gospel to our faithful and

bring the liturgical life into their homes. We were forced to miss Lent, Holy Week, and Pascha. And the challenges facing us for Christmas and the New Year and Theophany are looming heavy. We have to make decisions in accord with the surge in the virus that we are currently facing. But we are pulling through, and though we have lost many lives to COVID-19, we have not lost our faith and the commitment in the Church.

I want to especially thank their Eminences, the Metropolitans of the Holy Eparchial Synod, who have worked synergistically to ensure that the liturgical life and pastoral needs of the Faithful have been addressed so comprehensively through the dedicated work of the clergy of the Archdiocese from coast to coast.

And finally, let us not forget that just as we are gathered today through virtual means, a mere three months ago we held the highest delegate attended Clergy Laity Congress in the history of the Archdiocese. What this tells us, is that even in the midst of this global pandemic where businesses and institutions all around us are shutting down, the Christ-loving faithful of this sacred Archdiocese are committed, engaged and eager to be involved in the Church and will not give up their sacred tradition.

Our Archdiocese has also been enriched by the addition of two new auxiliary bishops — His Grace Bishop Spyridon of Amastris, and His Grace Bishop Timothy of Hexamilion — and a third auxiliary bishop — Bishop-Elect Ioannis of Phocaea — being ordained this coming Saturday. We are blessed to have such high-caliber clergy in this country, and we thank God for this blessing.

Indeed, my brothers and sisters, we have much to be thankful for, and much to be proud of in this year of 2020. And we can look forward to relief from the pandemic in the coming new year of 2021.

Next year will be the Bicentennial Celebration of the 1821 Greek Revolution, something to proudly observe across the Archdiocese. Next year we will open the Saint Nicholas National Shrine and hopefully have the presence of His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to preside at the Θυρανοίξια. Over this next year we will prepare to celebrate the Centennial of our own Archdiocese in 2022, and in concert and with the guidance of the Mother Church, prepare a new Charter for our Eparchy of the Throne. I have specific remarks about the Charter which I will give separately a little later on.

Indeed, there is much work before us. The next one hundred years of our Holy Archdiocese of America is before us, on the horizon. The present difficulties have,

in many ways, prepared us to face the future, and to keep finding new and innovative ways to accomplish our goals and extend the Kingdom of God in the world.

This Archdiocesan Council is both a repository of knowledge from the past, and a vital means for envisioning the future. I have no doubt that the service of all of you will be exemplary.

May God bless all our endeavors. Thank you.

goarch.org