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His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America Address at the Ordination of Bishop-Elect Ioannis of Phocaea



Saints George Greek Orthodox Church

Piscataway, New Jersey

December 19, 2020

Beloved Bishop-Elect of Phocaea, Your Grace Ioannis,

Today, we have assembled in this wonderful Parish of Saint George the Great-Martyr and Trophy-Bearer to bring you into the fullness of the ministry of the Great High Priest – our Lord Jesus Christ – and, together with our Brother Hierarchs, to elevate you to be the Bishop of Phocaea.

We intended to do so in the Metropolis of San Francisco, where you now serve as Chancellor to His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos, and where you will continue to serve. But the times made other plans for us all. Instead, by a blessed happenstance, we find ourselves here in Piscataway, in the parish that you served when you were first ordained a priest.

From 1992 to 1995, this flock was your charge, your παρακαταθήκη, entrusted to you by the Lord, and the then ever-memorable Hierarch of this Holy Metropolis, the late Metropolitan Silas. It was here that you received the offikia of Ekonomos and Archimandrite, and I am sure there are among us – both in body and spirit – faithful members of your flock who remember those happy days of your pastorate.

But, my beloved Bishop-elect, the Church has called you to an even greater commitment with weightier responsibilities. Now you are called to be a Bishop of the Church of God, a Bishop of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and our Sacred Archdiocese with the precious title of “Phocaea.”

It may surprise many of those assembled today to know that Phocaea, on the coast of Asia Minor, was a center of Hellenic life and thought over two-thousand-five-hundred years ago. The city is nestled in the region we call Ionia, where the greatest philosophers of the age before Socrates emerged. Names like Thales, Anaximander, Heraclitus and Anaxagoras revolutionized the way people thought about the world with their speculative and critical analysis.

And into this same region where ancient Phocaea sits, the Gospel of our Lord came in the First Century of the Christian era – to the Seven Churches of the Book of Revelation and beyond. Therefore, Phocaea is the inheritor of the genius of Greece and of the faith of the Apostles. Both these legacies are yours, my dear Bishop-elect Ioannis, and they are at your disposal as you commence your episcopal ministry.

You are called to bring to the Faithful the teaching of the Holy Gospel, baptized and suffused with the Hellenic spirit that is the essence of the Holy Fathers’ teaching. It is a double inheritance that the Church has guarded, transmitted by word of mouth and in writing, and shared with the world for two-thousand years.

As a bishop of the Church, you are to be ever-mindful of this high calling, and be unrestrained in embracing virtue. Listen to the words of the Holy Chrysostom, who describes the work of a bishop with his usual eloquence, by saying that a bishop performs his responsibilities:

... in the way that an accomplished musician plays a golden lyre, such that the harmony of its notes elevates the entire audience to a higher realm – so also the Bishop, not with a harmony of notes, but with the harmony of his words and actions, greatly benefits us.[*]

Here is an exhortation worthy of the high office to which you ascend today.

May the Lord instill in you the fullness of His grace and wisdom, that you may always be found worthy of this great ministry of our High Priest the Lord Jesus Christ, all the days of your life.

Amen.

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