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His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America Homily at the Κατάδυσις τοῦ Τιμίου Σταυροῦ on Holy Theophany



Greek Orthodox Church of Saint Nicholas

Spring Bayou, Tarpon Springs, Florida

January 6, 2021

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

We continue our rejoicing over the Epiphany of our Lord and the Theophany of our God, here at the Bayou, with the venerable tradition of the Κατάδυσις τοῦ Τιμίου Σταυροῦ – the Immersion of the Holy Cross and its retrieval by one of our exceptional young people.

The Immersion of the Cross – its “baptism,” if you will – is an ancient sign of the universal presence of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross as the animating and quickening essence of the world.

And we have an image of the Cross in the water from the life of the Prophet

Elisha.[*]Once, when he was standing by the River Jordan, an ax being used lost its iron head as it flew off the handle and fell into the river. The one who was using the ax asked the prophet for help, as it was borrowed. The ax head itself is a symbol of human life and industry, which is, indeed, borrowed from God and must be returned to Him.

The Prophet Elisha, answering the man's call, took a piece of wood and cast it in the Jordan, and at once, against every expectation, the ax head floated. Then, Elisha commanded the man: "Lift it up" — Ὑψωσον! [†] And the man recovered it, much as one of you will recover the Cross today.

* * *

My beloved brothers and sisters, and especially our valiant young people waiting for the Cross:

What will it take for each of us to embrace the Cross of the Lord and lift our lives heavenward?

What will it take for us to understand that whatever we build, whatever we achieve, whatever we accomplish in this life, is destined to sink beneath the waves of history? Only the Cross of Christ exalts us and our lives to everlasting meaning and purpose.

We bless these waters today, and we bless your lives with the Cross. And although only one will retrieve the Holy Wood, you are all blessed by its Sacred Immersion today.

Therefore, I call upon all of you to lift up the Cross in your hearts, in your souls, and in your minds. As you dive into the depths to retrieve it, know that Its holy power can lift you up in your every endeavor, to the glory of God and to your eternal salvation.

Ὑψωσον!

[*] II Kings 6:1-7.

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