

29/03/2021

## **Archbishop Elpidophoros of America, Address on Ordination to the Diaconate of Elias Pappas**



My beloved Sub-deacon Elias,

What an extraordinary day for you to present yourself for Ordination, on this Second Sunday of the Holy Fast – that of Saint Gregory Palamas, and the thirtieth anniversary of your father’s priestly ordination. And I, your proud godfather, and friend to your family for all these decades, stand before you, blessed to be the Archbishop who welcomes you into the ranks of the clergy.

This is truly an emotionally powerful day for us all, as we see the family and the parish that reared you become the starting-gate for your ministry in the Church. This ministry was imbued in you by your family, and it has permeated your life. Through your childhood, your education and, finally, in your years at our Seminary, your life, dear Elias, has been like that of the Apostle Timothy; as Saint Paul recalled, ‘the unfeigned faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your family.’

Your entry into the first rank of the Holy Priesthood today confirms that your family is a Levitical Family – a priestly family dedicated unto the Lord. We hear of the first such Levites in the Book of Numbers:

And the Lord said to Moses, “Bring the tribe of Levi near, and set them before Aaron the priest, that they may minister to him. They shall perform duties for him and for the whole congregation before the tent of meeting, as they minister at the tabernacle; they shall have charge of all the furnishings of the tent of meeting, and attend to the duties for the people of Israel as they minister at the tabernacle.

Today, my beloved Elias, you join the ministers of the Ἀχειροποίητο – the Tabernacle Not-Made-with-Hands. For we do not serve an earthly sacrifice in a single Tabernacle, which only promises a redemption that is to come.

We are the Levites who have gone beyond the rituals of Aaron, the brother of Moses. We have risen above him, sharing now, by grace, in the order of Melchizedek.

We serve the One Who is the Light of the world, in Whom the shadows of the Old Covenant are enlightened by the New.

We serve no single place, but throughout the world in Temples like this one, because the Faith of the Orthodox has established the Oikoumene.

We are the ministers of the New Covenant, proclaimed on the night in which our Lord gave Himself up for the life of the world, when He said:

So just as My Father made a covenant with Me for the Kingdom, I make this covenant with you, that you shall eat and drink at My Table in My Kingdom....

And so, my beloved Sub-deacon Elias, we eat and drink at His Holy Table in the Divine Liturgy, which is both the foretaste and the fulfillment of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. As we chant in the concluding prayers of Thanksgiving after receiving Holy Communion:

Οὐρανὸς πολύφωτος ἡ Ἐκκλησία ἀνεδείχθη, ἅπαντας φωταγωγοῦσα τοὺς πιστοὺς, ἐν ᾧ ἐστῶτες κραυγάζομεν· Τοῦτον τὸν οἶκον στερέωσον, Κύριε.

The Church is revealed to be a many-lighted heaven, which illuminates all of the faithful; standing in it, we cry aloud: O Lord, make firm this house.

Today, my dear Elias, you join your father, the Reverend Protopresbyter Christos

Pappas, in the family of the New Levites who serve the True Tabernacle of God. This is the very God Who became incarnate for us and makes His own Tabernacle in every human heart that will receive Him. You serve the Great High Priest, Who, as the Apostle Paul says:

... appeared as a High Priest of the good things to come; and then, through the Greater and More Perfect Tabernacle (Not-Made-With-Hands, that is, not of this creation), He entered once for all into the Holy Place, not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own Blood, thus securing eternal redemption.

Do you see, my dear son, what an awe-filled ministry you embark upon today?

We stand on planet earth, but we minister in Heave

n with the Angels, and even above them, as they desire to behold what we behold in the Holy Mysteries.

We are vested on the outside with the symbols of our ecclesiastical rank, but it is the grace of the Holy Spirit, that “heals that which is infirm and completes that which is lacking” in our hearts, for the greater glory of God.

Today, you will stand as a deacon in order to give voice to the petitions of the People of God; but it is the grace of the Holy Spirit that brings power to your ministry.

You will stand as a deacon, to be a true servant of the People of God, serving the Holy Table of Divine Food, as did once the Seven Deacons who served the tables of ordinary food and drink.

Therefore, my beloved Sub-deacon Elias:

Enter into this ministry of the King of Salem, Melchizedek, who offered bread and wine to the Lord Himself, and who shows us that the priesthood is changed in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Enter into the legacy of your family, and the blessing of the Church.

Enter now into a life of service to Christ and ministry to His flock.

And may the Lord always guide and inspire you to bring all glory, honor, and worship to our God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – this day, and forevermore, unto ages of ages. Amen.

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# Saint Joseph the Hesychast

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