31/05/2021

His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America Annunciation Orthodox School Graduation Address



Dear Members of the Board of Trustees,

Esteemed Faculty and Administration,

And most important of all, the Families and Graduates of 2021,

Χριστὸς Ἀνέστη!

Christ is Risen!

I greet all of you with the Easter joy of the Orthodox Church, which I bring as Archbishop of America, on this Fiftieth Anniversary of the Annunciation Orthodox School.

How proud all of you must be today! I am truly delighted to be sharing your accomplishments with you, and I offer my heartfelt congratulations to you, your parents, your families, and to this wonderful School – who have all supported you throughout your time here.

In fact, your graduation is the very reason I came to Houston from the Archdiocesan Headquarters in New York City. Because this fiftieth year celebration is, indeed, important to the whole Church! The Annunciation Orthodox School is an exemplary institution of the Greek Orthodox Church in America, and you should all be very proud of your School and of your accomplishments.

I know that not all of you belong to the Orthodox Church, but there is something very special about our Easter Greeting: “Christ is Risen,” that is so appropriate for this occasion today.

And it is this: through your hard work and belief in yourselves, you, too, are rising today.

We call this a commencement, which means a beginning. Because passing this milestone on your journey through life is just another beginning along the path.

All of you, who are moving on from the Annunciation School family and heading to High Schools – where you will prepare even more for life and your educational goals – are rising.

You are rising to more than academic excellence.

You are rising to more than your athletic pursuits.

You are rising to more than a bigger social life – whether it is through your social media or through contact with real live human beings!

You are rising to the moral, ethical and spiritual meaning of what it means to be a complete human being in the Twenty-first Century.

Of course, I don’t mean it to sound like too much!

After all, I didn’t come here to weigh you down with heavy responsibilities too soon, in what I pray are long, healthy and happy lives.

However, I am going to be honest with you. You are a generation that is going to witness more change on planet earth than any other before you.

We take our technology for granted; like it’s always been there. But it hasn’t. Although you are all still teenagers – and I hope and pray you enjoy your teenage years – you are going to see changes that your parents could not imagine, and they will help prepare you for those changes still to come.

And this is precisely why you must rise – and rise not only to the challenges you will face in your new schools. But rise to the challenge of being a full and whole human being, whose life is more than pursuits – whether they be of success in school or sports, or even relationships.

The true success of a human being is in your capacity for empathy, for compassion, for seeing the other person’s perspective, for hope, for faith and for love.

These are lessons that come from life, and the institutions that you will enter will give you many opportunities to learn them – just as you have learned them here at the Annunciation School.

As you continue to rise in your lives, then, in every aspect of maturity– through High School, and perhaps to College and University, and on into your chosen professions and relationships:

Make sure that you also rise in your spiritual aspirations.

Be sure that compassion and love for others rises in your hearts.

And you will rise in every true success that life holds for you. You will always succeed in all your endeavors, and the Lord will bless you always.

Χριστὸς Ἀνέστη! Christ is Risen!

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