28/06/2021

His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros Address at the Ordination to the Priesthood of Deacon Thomas Manuel



Beloved Deacon Thomas,

Today, you stand in the temple of the Living God, surrounded by Seraphim and Cherubim, the People of God and the “great cloud of witnesses.”[1] You stand as one who has served the Holy Altar as a Deacon, and is now stepping forward to the ministry of the Honorable Presbyterate in Christ.

And I know, that in your heart, you hear “the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” [2]

Your love of mission is leading you to answer the call to go forth to Guatemala. You have said in your heart: “Here am I; send me!” [3]

You are going to Guatemala at an extraordinary time. For the spiritual father of us all, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, will be making a Patriarchal and Apostolic Visit to Guatemala for the very first time in November of this year. As you set forth on your own mission, you must think of the Forerunner and Baptist John, who

prepared the way for his Lord.

You will also have the opportunity to do much for the Visit of His All-Holiness. And for this gift, you should be very grateful, indeed. What an extraordinary time and blessing to which you will bear witness.

But in embracing this apostolate, I counsel you with the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, that he spoke to his own Apostles:

Ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, οὐκ ἔστι δοῦλος μείζων τοῦ κυρίου αὐτοῦ, οὐδὲ ἀπόστολος μείζων τοῦ πέμψαντος αὐτόν. Εἰ ταῦτα οἴδατε, μακάριοί ἐστε ἐὰν ποιῆτε αὐτά.

Truly, truly, I say unto you: a servant is not greater than his lord; nor is the apostle – the one sent, greater than the one who sent him. If you understand these things, happy and blessed are you if you act on them. [4]

Here is the secret for you to live a godly apostolate of mission. You, beloved Fr. Thomas, are the one sent. The Church sends you – not for your own satisfaction or fulfillment – but for the ministry of the Word. I pray you will truly find personal fulfillment and satisfaction, but you are sent by those under authority, to minister in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Remember what the Roman Centurion said to the Lord Jesus Christ:

“I say to this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes. To another, ‘Come,’ and he comes. And to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.”[5]

Here is the model for the priesthood, because it is not mere obedience; it is obedience with understanding and knowledge. Even as the Greek word for obedience, ὑπακοή, contains in its essence the idea of listening, ἀκοή, rather than a slavish following of orders.

And so, my beloved Deacon, this is how your ministry will flourish. For as the Lord said to that Roman Centurion:

“Amen, I say to you, not even in Israel have I found faith as great as this! And I tell you, many will come from East and West to recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven.” [6]

From East and West, and from North – and especially for you, Fr. Thomas, from the South. Here is the fruit of such blesséd obedience. Here is the harvest that can be reaped for the Kingdom of God, because it begins and ends with the understanding of Divine Order, which is the order of the Church.

May you always be blessed to serve at the Table of the Lord, and to lead others to recline with you – in peace, understanding, faith and knowledge. May your apostolate and your priesthood be ever filled with the fruits of obedience to the word of the Lord. And may you always rejoice with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Amen.

[1] Hebrews 12:1.

[2] Isaiah 6:8.

[3] Ibid.

[4] John 13:16-17.

[5] Mathew 8:9.

[6] Mathew 8:10-11.

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