15/09/2021

His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America Divine Liturgy of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross



My Beloved Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

“While you have the light, trust in the light, that you may become children of light.”[*]

This beloved community of Holy Cross, Whitestone – this is the place where all of you are called to “become children of light.”

Every time you enter this Church, and you participate in some manner of fellowship or education, there is a single purpose behind it. For you to be illumined from within by the Light of Christ. But we must be pure about our motives and sincere in our desires. As the Lord Himself solemnly warns:

“The lamp of the body is the eye. If your eye is clear and pure, your whole body will glow with light; but if your eye is flawed and evil, then your whole body will be in the dark. And if the light that is in you is darkness, O what darkness there will be![†]

How then, to expand our minds and hearts without expanding our egos? What is

the secret – τό μυστικό – to enlarging your personhood, without puffing up your pride?

The answer is found here – today – in the Presence of the Holy Cross, and in Its Exaltation. The Cross is called many things: Ladder to Heaven, Weapon of Peace, Invincible Trophy. But is is also a balance beam, upon which life of the spirit is harmonized with the life of the mind.

True knowledge of God is not based in the powers of your intellect, but in the capacity and the vitality of your heart. For it is in the human heart that the Light of Christ shines and dispels all trace of darkness and shadow. In your heart is where your faith grounds you, and where it graces you with, as Hebrews says, "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen."[‡] When the Lord calls us today in the Gospel of the Orthros to "believe in the light, to trust in the light," He is not calling us to rely on our own understanding.

As the great King and Prophet Solomon says:

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart; and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."[§]

Therefore, my beloved friends: Let us treasure this feast – your Patronal Feast – to deepen your heart knowledge, to live life with intense devotion to God, and genuine love for our fellow human beings.

That is why the Cross is your balance, your harmony, your spiritual equilibrium. Because the Lord willingly ascended upon the Cross, as we chant today: Ὁ ὑψωθεὶς ἐν τῷ Σταυρῷ ἑκουσίως.

And if He did so for one then He did so for all – for those we love and for those we hate, for those we like and for those we dislike, for those we know and for those we do not even care to know. Our opinions, our likes and dislikes are irrelevant to God's love and God's purpose for His every creature. They are important only for us to embrace the challenge of loving as God loves, of forgiving as God forgives, of giving as God gives, of becoming living mirrors, who reflect God in the world.

This you can only learn from one Teacher and one teacher alone: The Cross.

The Cross condemns no one.

The Cross endures every humiliation.

The Cross waits patiently for us to come to the Place of the Skull – Τόπος Κρανίου,

Γολγοθά, where we can die to our selfish, egocentric desires and learn to live for others.

In its Universal Exaltation today we remind ourselves that it is an animate and life-giving Tree – ἔμψυχον Ξύλον[**] – a living Teacher of the truth of God's love for us, and of the possibility of love for one another.

May you always be disciples of the best Teacher: the Cross of Christ.

Then you shall be truly be the loving community of believers that we are called to be, by God's grace, the children of the Light.

Amen.

[*] John 12:36, Matins Gospel of the Feast.

[†] Matthew 6:22,23.

[‡] Hebrews 11:1.

[§] Proverbs 3:5,6.

[**] Salutations to the Precious Cross, Stasis Λ.

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