20/09/2021

His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America Sunday after the Exaltation of the Holy Cross



My Beloved Christians – brothers and sisters in the Lord,

I am truly delighted to be with you today, at this magnificent Cathedral of Ἁγία Σοφία – the Mother Church of South-East Florida. I am especially pleased that I can be here for this celebration of your remarkable program of the restoration of the Cathedral, made possible by the generosity of so many, and – although he would not want me to mention his name, my dear friend Michael Huffington.

Today, in dedicating the dome of the Church where the Pantokrator – the Ruler of All, and the Lord of Heaven and Earth – our Lord Jesus Christ, reigns, we are all rededicating our lives to the truth and beauty of the Gospel of our Lord. The Gospel that preaches love, respect, mercy, forgiveness, and compassion for all of creation.

When you look upwards into the Dome, I always want you to think about our God, Who looks down upon all creatures with love. Although He is the Judge of the Universe, He does not condemn anyone. Though He is the Creator of all things, "visible and invisible" as we affirm in the Creed, He grants all things the liberty to be themselves.

And though we call the image in the Dome, Παντοκράτωρ, usually translated as "Almighty," the meaning is deeper in the Greek. There is a sense of holding all things together, like that famous African-American spiritual, "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands." Allow me to note that this hymn was first published in 1927, around the same time as the founding of this Cathedral. Isn't it wonderful how, here in America, the many streams of culture and faith can run together into a river of praise for our Glorious God?

All of your labors here in Miami, have been rewarded, and I have to say, every member of this Church is to be congratulated. Because you accomplished all of this beautiful renovation in the midst of the pandemic, from which we are still not free and clear.

As I think about your accomplishments, I feel it is important to remember all those who came before us, the forefathers and foremothers of this Community, who brought about this Cathedral in the years after World War II. The construction of this magnificent edifice in those days – a time of recovery for a war-weary world, was truly a great accomplishment of Faith. As the Hymn says: Μεγάλα τὰ τῆς Πίστεως κατορθώματα![*] Your parents and grandparents made great sacrifices at that time for their own children. You have honored their oblation of love and service, by the work of renewal that you have fulfilled for the generations yet to be born.

And I must say that our remembrances of the past of this precious Church would be incomplete, if I did not speak the name of the late and ever-memorable Father Demosthenes Mekras. He was of the first generation of priests who came from the Pomfret, Connecticut Holy Cross Seminary of bygone years. He served this Cathedral from 1944, until his falling asleep in the Lord in 2005, when he had been Pastor Emeritus for nearly twenty years. He was present for the very first Divine

Liturgy in this Cathedral in 1949, on the Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos, presided over by my righteous predecessor, Archbishop Michael of blessèd memory. What a history that everyone can be proud of! Whether your family has been here for generations, or today is your first time in attendance.

Because, Saint Sophia Cathedral is truly a House of Wisdom. It is a loving and inclusive community where Christ – the Word and Wisdom of God – is glorified and taught in our Holy Orthodox tradition. It is a place for which you all must be very grateful, and I know that today you most certainly are, as you behold the glories of your restored and refreshed Church, fully revealed.

I pray that as the months and years go by, you will always cherish this Cathedral and bring forth new treasures out of old. Miami is certainly a richer city because of this Church. May your love also be so enriched, that you have the spiritual depth to give to others, and so fulfill the law of love.

May the Good Lord bless you all by the power of His Holy Cross. Amen.

[*] Apolytikion of the Sunday before the Nativity of Christ.

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