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Opening Remarks for the Bishop Gerasimos Memorial Conferenc



His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America
Opening Remarks for the Bishop Gerasimos Memorial Conference
Maliotis Cultural Center

Your Eminences and Graces,
President Cantonis,
Esteemed Faculty of past and present,
Dear Students,
Beloved Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

In the alternate verses of the Synaxarion of the Feast of the Deposition of the Holy Relics of Saint Gerasimos the New in Cephalonia, we hear the holy one praised as follows: Γέρας γεραρὸν καὶ ἄγηρον….

As usual, the sacred and often nameless poets of our Church play with language as only Greek allows. And so, we hear the name of the Saint echoed in these syllables that bespeak him as “Priestly Honor, reverend and ageless….”

And as is often the case, the translation of these epigrams is difficult. Yet, these words also provide us with an invocation of the saintly Bishop we invoke this evening, the ever-memorable Bishop Gerasimos of Abydos.

Bishop Gerasimos brought honor to his ministry in the Church, and to whatever that service was – as I already mentioned in this evening’s Great Vespers. As far back as Homer, the word, γέρας, conveys the idea of a “gift,” even a “kingly privilege.”

Thus, it so clearly exemplifies the life and ministry of our beloved Bishop Gerasimos. For especially here at Hellenic College and Holy Cross, in his latter years – I will not say retired, for he was working with great spiritual energy – his daily presence was truly a gift, a gift of the Kingdom. This was a boon to the students above all others, but also a gift to the faculty and administration. For he was a tranquil port for any and all to find safe harbor during their storms of doubt and anxiety.

I know a former student of this place, who told me how Bishop Gerasimos would seek him out and employ him on his famed pruning expeditions around the grounds. No words were exchanged, but the presence of the husbandman of the Lord brought great comfort to the student. And why should it not be so? In the days of Anthony the Great, there were monks who traveled land and sea just to behold his presence.

And it should be no surprise that Bishop Gerasimos – who knew so well the Gospel that speaks these immortal words: Ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ ἄμπελος ἡ ἀληθινή, καὶ ὁ πατήρ μου ὁ γεωργός ἐστι – should himself become a γεωργός of souls. He was a true husbandman of the spiritual life of this campus, refining and pruning in small ways, but for great effect.

Therefore, our conference and the presentations that will take place today and tomorrow are surely most worthy, and reflect the worthiness and reverence of the Bishop himself.

He is both γεραρὸν καὶ ἄγηρον; consummate in piety and devotion, and ageless for our application of the many virtues he embodied.

It is my prayer that as we hold him up as a model of excellence in the spiritual life, we take to heart the many lessons he taught us and impress them on our own lives.

We are all called to be saints, as the Apostle reminds us. Magnifying the βίος καὶ πολιτεία of Bishop Gerasimos should not become an excuse to externalize his virtues heavenward. The Lord knows all His Saints and performs wonders in them as He wills.

Let us, then, take the blessèd Bishop Gerasimos as our shining inspiration to imitate his love of Christ and his love of the Church. Thus, we shall honor his memory and the meaning of his saintly life.

Thank you.

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