22/11/2021

His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America Forefeast of the Entrance of the Theotokos to the Temple



My beloved Deacon George,

Today, on the threshold of the Feast of the Entrance of the All-Holy Theotokos into the Temple of the Law, you stand on the threshold of the Holy Priesthood.

Just as our Lady, the Blessed Ever-Virgin Mary, stood below the steps of the Holy of Holies in Jerusalem, you, too, now stand just a few steps from the new Holy of Holies, that will be your ministry here at the Church of our Saviour.

She was brought close to that Altar of Sacrifice where the blood of animals was spilled. And now, you stand so very close to the Holy Table where the Mystery of the Body and Blood of our Lord manifests.

She replaced the Temple of the Law and all that was within it, by becoming Herself the Temple of the Incarnate God. You will now become a minister of the Mystery of the Living Temple made without hands – the Church that was fashioned by Her Son on the Cross, when He gave Himself up for the life of the world.

The Mother of God, as a little three-year-old child, was brought into the Holy of Holies by the High Priest himself, who dared to enter only once a year.

Now, you join the numberless generations of priests who, as the Scripture says:

Ἀπενεχθήσονται ἐν εὐφροσύνῃ καὶ ἀγαλλιάσει ἀχθήσονται εἰς ναὸν βασιλέως.

They shall be brought with gladness and rejoicing, they shall be brought into the temple of the King. [*]

And the Name of the High Priest, Who brings you into the Temple of the King today, is the Holy Name of the Priest and King and Prophet, Who is our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ!

Here, in the Church of the Saviour, which you have served as both layman and Deacon, the Savior Himself leads you to this step, upon which you stand to take up the yoke of our Chief Shepherd, symbolized by the Ἐπιτραχήλιον that will surround both shoulders, replacing the one shoulder of the Deacon’s Ὀράριον. You will kneel before the Lord of Hosts on both knees – and not only with one knee, as you did on the day of your Diaconal Ordination. For today, in order to ascend to God in the ministry of the Holy Priesthood, you must bow in utter humility before His awesome gift.

The Virgin danced upon the Third Step of the Altar, and the House of Israel loved her. [†]

As you stand before the steps into this Altar, Deacon George, I ask you to close your eyes and enter into the secret presence within your soul before God. [‡] Withdraw just for a moment from the beauty of this place, into the beauty of that precious place of solitude within your heart, where you dwell alone with God. There, you are also called into the Divine dance of Love that is the life of the Holy Trinity. Each of the Divine Persons, flows into the other in a Holy Unity beyond all description, all telling and all understanding.

Rest always in that Love; rejoice always in that Love; and dance always in that Love.

In your first steps of the mystical marriage of the Holy Priesthood, you will circle the Holy Altar exulting in the Dance of Isaiah – just as you took your first steps in Holy Matrimony to your beloved Diakonissa, and in a few moments, Presvytera Arah (Maria).

Join now the limitless line of celebrants whose prayers to the Lord bring joy to the Faithful. Enter now into the Holy Priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ! Enter into the legacy of your family, and the blessing of the Church. And enter now into a life of service to Christ and ministry to His flock.

May the Lord always guide and inspire you to always bring all glory, honor, and worship to our God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – this day, and forever, unto ages of ages. Amen.

[*] Psalm 44:14 (LXX).

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[‡] Cf. John 14:23.

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