24/01/2022

# Archbishop Elpidophoros of America, Address at Priestly Ordination of Deacon Sophronios Vomend



My beloved Deacon Sophronios,

Today, you increase the measure of your faith, and take on new responsibilities as a Presbyter of our Holy Orthodox Church. Anticipating your life of service and ministry, our great Spiritual Father, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, chose for you the name, “Sophronios.” You were called after the newly-glorified Saint Sophrony the Hagiorite, and your name bears great wisdom for you, as you ascend the ranks of the clergy.

As you know, one who is σώφρων, is of sound mind. He is known to be prudent, temperate, reasonable – a person of moderation. And this is the middle way, the Royal Way, that was promised by Moses on behalf of the Children of Israel, when he said:

We will go by the king’s highway; we will not turn to the right hand nor to the left….[*]

And so it shall be for you as well, Father Sophronios. You must conduct your journey in the Holy Priesthood along the King of King’s Highway. For you are called

to a life of service that is balanced and wholesome.

While the Holy Priesthood is a high calling, the externals of ministry should be based in an internal spiritual life that is marked by σωφρωσύνη. As the great philosopher Heraclitus says:

Σωφρονεῖν ἀρετὴ μεγίστη, καὶ σοφίη ἀληθέα λέγειν καὶ ποιεῖν κατὰ φύσιν ἐπαίοντας.

Sophrosyne is the greatest virtue, and wisdom is speaking and acting the truth, paying heed to the nature of things. [†]

Spoken centuries before the Nativity in Bethlehem, the Greek Philosopher mirrors the very words of our Lord Jesus Christ:

Ὁ δὲ ποιῶν τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἔρχεται πρὸς τὸ φῶς, ἵνα φανερωθῇ αὐτοῦ τὰ ἔργα, ὅτι ἐν Θεῷ ἐστιν εἰργασμένα.

But those who act from truth come to the light, so that their deeds will be revealed as being sustained by God. [‡]

Therefore, my beloved Deacon, truth is something that is not just spoken or verbal in nature. It is performed and acted out through σωφρωσύνη, and it demonstrates the wisdom of God's grace in your life. For Christ Himself is the Truth, the Way and the Life, for each and every one of us. [§]

Therefore, in embracing the Priesthood today, and in being embraced by our Great Hight Priest Jesus Christ, you are committing your life to one where the monastic virtues you embraced when you became a Deacon are amplified. For the Monk knows only one extreme – the love of God.

All other aspects of your priestly life are to be marked by the good characteristics of σωφρωσύνη. You are a servant of the King of Kings, and therefore, you must travel in your ministry on the King's Highway.

As I said to you on the day of your ordination to the Deaconate, over one year ago:

[This] path has been trodden from the ages and from all generations by the cross and death. … The path of God is a daily cross. No one has ascended into Heaven by means of ease…"[**]

There is no route that is safer or more secure for the life you have chosen. And there is no path more sure than the one that has been smoothed by all those who

have gone before you. And so, my prayer for you today is that you become – both in name and reality – a true Sophronios throughout all the years of your ministry.

Therefore, my beloved Deacon, ascend the steps to the Altar, and commence your lifelong journey on the King of Kings' Highway, which is the way of σωφρωσύνη – of moderation, prudence, wisdom and truthfulness with yourself and before God.

May He always grant you to stay the course, and may you always embrace the Way of the Cross – both in your monastic calling and in your priestly service to our Great High Priest Jesus Christ, Who, through the prayers of the Holy Theotokos, will grant you His grace, His strength and the will to fulfill your destiny in Him. Amen.

[*] Numbers 20:17.

[†] Fragment 112.

[‡] John 3:21.

[§] Cf. John 14:6.

[**] Homily 59.

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