23/05/2022

His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros Homily at Divine Liturgy for Ss. Constantine & Helen



Beloved Community of Hellenic College and Holy Cross,

Χριστὸς Ἀνέστη!

Christ is Risen!

Χριστὸς Ἀνέστη!

As we inaugurate this day of new beginnings for our proud graduates, it is indeed “meet and right” that we begin with the Divine Worship of God, here in our magnificent Chapel of the Holy Cross. Especially because this is the Feast of Saints Constantine and Helen, the Equals-to-the-Apostles!

As I observed last evening at the Vespers and Stavrophoria, one Saint beheld the Cross in the sky, and the other saw it beneath the gentle verdant leaves of baskiliko; and how are Faith was transformed by both visions!

On this of Commencement – the start of new journeys and adventures for our graduates, let us take from the theoria that each Saint offers to us even now. Let

those who now depart from this precious Σχολή look back to the legacy of the God-crowned ones for their inspiration going forward.

From the mighty Constantine, first Christian Emperor of Old and New Rome, let us seize upon the politeia of what came to be known as the Byzantine Empire. It bequeathed to the world a symphonia of secular and sacred. It is not a fool's errand to seek to transform society by them values of God's Kingdom. We recite the Lord's Prayer so often that perhaps we do not hear the message:

Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven.

ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου, γενηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς.

Bringing about the Kingdom of God on this earth is part of our vocation as Orthodox Christians. This does not mean imposing our views and values on others against their will. It does mean working for the conversion of hearts and minds – through our ministry of love, compassion, mercy, and generosity.

Saint Constantine set off a "noble experiment," as Steven Runciman once put it. And this experiment to bring Heaven and Earth together, as we await the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, is as valid today as it was seventeen centuries ago.

The City of Constantine that was the capital of the Christian Roman Empire may have passed into history, but its spiritual reflection – the Ecumenical Patriarchate – is alive and well. The work of transforming our world into the Realm and Reign of God has never ended.

But please note well:

Violence and force – like what Russia is inflicting on Ukraine in the murky name of Orthodox values, will never succeed. This is not how society is transfigured, but this is how the very essence of what it means to be human is disfigured!

We can look back on the history of our Church, and how it meshed with civil society – and we can be honest about the shortcomings, even as we take righteous pride in the accomplishments.

That is why our vision inspired by the Sign of the Cross must be rooted in the theoria of Saint Helen, for she beheld the very instrument of our Lord's death in the flesh. And we are blessed to have a fragment of that Same Life-giving Wood here in our Chapel.

The reality of Crucifixion can never be reduced to a mere symbol. There was rough-

hewn wood. There were nails. There was the torment and brutality of this Roman execution. There are real-life consequences for Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is not an academic exercise.

Therefore, my beloved Christians:

Here at this School, let us pursue the vision of Saints Constantine and Helen. With one, we seek to transform the world around us. With the other, we recognize the steep and dear price that has to be paid to make that transformation possible. The mother and her son will teach us every day, if we will but open our eyes as they opened theirs.

Χριστὸς Ἀνέστη!

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