06/07/2022

Remarks by His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America at the Clergy Breakfast



Most Honorable Delegation of the Mother Church of Constantinople:
Your Eminence Elder-Metropolitan Emmanuel of Chalcedon,
Your Eminence Metropolitan Prodromos of Rethymnon and Avlopotamos, and Very Reverend Grand Ecclesiarch Aetios,
Your Eminences and Graces,
My dear brothers in Christ,

I am very delighted by the attendance here this morning, and so glad to have had the opportunity to greet all of you personally. I must say that circulating among you has made for the best breakfast that I can possibly have, as I am nourished and encouraged by your presence.

As you already know, this is my first in-person Clergy Laity-Congress, and I see now why so many people have told me how much the clergy look forward to it. Indeed, it is like a reunion of brothers who may have gone to Seminary together, but have been separated by miles and years. I do hope that all of you will find quality time to spend together over the coming days and renew your friendships.

It is one of the reasons the APC is so important to support in the intervening years, and I want to thank the outgoing and incoming APC Presidents, Fathers Leondis and

Kaplanis, for their service. The Council is your organization, and I exhort all of you to support it and be as involved as your very busy lives allow.

While I will have more to say to you in the course of this Congress, I would like to reaffirm to you my personal commitment to your security vis-à-vis the Pension (a commitment that I made in my keynote address yesterday) and to your security in respect to the Charter developments. You are clergy of a unified Archdiocese, under the Mother Church of Constantinople. Your interests and the interests of your families are a priority to me and to the institution of the Archdiocese.

This is not a case of dividing anyone's loyalties. We are first and foremost faithful to Christ. But we are also members of His Body, the Holy Church, and, as such, we are in relationship to one another. Therefore, I want each and every one of you to feel seen and heard. For pastoring our communities in such diverse and conflicted times as we are living in is a very stressful challenge, indeed. That is why, in this Centennial Year of our Archdiocese, I have cited our Unity in Christ as the foundation upon which every aspect of our ministry must be built.

And consistent with this emphasis, I would like to single out a superb example among our brethren who understands what unity means for a truly successful pastorate.

At this moment, I invite our Centennial Honoree, Protopresbyter John Bakas, to come forward. Father John has literally transformed the Cathedral of Saint Sophia in Los Angeles over the course of his ministry. Twenty-five years ago, when His All-Holiness visited Saint Sophia and saw the astounding work of Father John and the Cathedral in the Byzantine-Latino Quarter of Los Angeles, he said the following:

"We recognize the power at work here, a power so great that the dreams it nourishes, can only be limited by the measure of our inner faith, and the boundaries of our imagination. It is our spiritual foundation that defines us, and our love that moves us." (November 7, 1997)

This was the ministry of Father John then … and it is the ministry of Father John now. It is truly a model for the next Hundred Years. And so, in his person, I honor all of you as well.

(PRESENTATION)

Thank you for your ministries.

Thank you for your devotion.

Thank you for your dedication.

And thank you for being the priests of God that you are.

You are all most worthy clergymen of the Most High God!

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