25/07/2022

Remarks at the AHEPA Grand Banquet and Ball, 100th AHEPA Supreme Convention



Your Excellency Nikolaos Panagiotopoulos, Minister of National Defense of the Hellenic Republic,

Your Excellencies,

Honorable Congressman of the United States, Gus Bilirakis,

Dear friend and Supreme President of AHEPA, Jimmy Kokotas,

Grand President of the Daughters of Penelope, Kathy Bizoukas,

Beloved brothers and sisters of AHEPA and the Daughters of Penelope,

Distinguished guests and esteemed friends,

In this marvelous year of anniversaries – one hundred years for AHEPA and one hundred years for the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America – I am thrilled to be with you at this celebration of noble deeds and fellowship.

It is impossible in the time permitted – and, perhaps, impossible even if permitted

all day and all night – to enumerate what the American Hellenic

Educational and Progressive Association means for the Omogeneia, in this country and across the sea.

AHEPA is and has been – for a century – a binding agent throughout the Western Hemisphere for the interest of Hellenes everywhere.

You are a powerful force that has held our community together – for the sake of culture, language and the interests of Greece, Cyprus and our Ecumenical Patriarchate. Together with the Church, the clergy and the Hierarchy, as well as in every parish, AHEPA has been a partner, a yoke-fellow, helping to carry the cause of Hellenism and Orthodoxy forward through the decades.

You should all be very proud of this moment, just as so many of you were proud to be present just a few weeks ago in New York for the Centennial Clergy-Laity Congress of our Sacred Archdiocese. There, we consecrated the Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and National Shrine, a truly nation-wide ministry of our Church, to which AHEPA was an early and enthusiastic donor of one million dollars. May the Lord ever bless you for your ready and generous spirit.

But AHEPA shows its support and commitment in so many different ways. It truly is not possible to recount all your achievements, especially at the local level. AHEPA works hand in hand with our communities and supports the ministries of the Church.

And not only here, but your work in Greece – especially holding the Supreme Convention in Athens last year for the Bicentennial of Greece – is

constructive, positive and, above all, affirming of the close ties between the Diaspora and the Motherlands of Greece, Cyprus, and the holy remnants in Asia Minor and even in Slavic lands. You are the connective tissue that binds us into a holistic community.

As you celebrate and remember your first century of mission and purpose, allow me to call to mind something very special to me about AHEPA.

When our spiritual fathers and mothers – who made the journey across the great ocean to this blesséd land, and were shut out, denied and even persecuted for being immigrants – AHEPA stood tall for their rights. And not only in confronting prejudice against Hellenes, but prejudice against anyone.

You should take such great pride in the founding principles of this sacred

brotherhood; for you uphold the traditions of what is best in Hellas, and what is best in America.

We all understand that we live in polarized times. Prejudice still rears its ugly head. But AHEPA is still here to be a voice that celebrates the dignity of all people, because you understand what it means to be Greek. What it means to be children of Athens and children of Jerusalem. What it means to embrace the stately columns of the Parthenon, and the great vaults and celestial dome of Hagia Sophia.

Especially in these days, when we mourn the loss of the Great Church, AHEPA understands what it is to speak with boldness on behalf of justice, on behalf of peace, and on behalf of righteousness.

I thank all of you and congratulate you for your passion and commitment.

Let us make of the next hundred years the brightest future for ourselves and the coming generations.

Together – AHEPA and the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America – let us give to our community the spiritual, cultural, and in the fullest sense of the Greek πόλις, the political nourishment the Omogeneia deserves, and the world so desperately needs.

May the Good Lord bless you all!

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