26/07/2022

Eulogy By His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America For Professor George Bebis



Your Graces,

Dear Father Paul, beloved nephews, great nephews, great nieces, and all members of the esteemed and bereaved Bebis Family,

Beloved Community of Hellenic College and Holy Cross,

Reverend clergy, faculty and staff, friends and loved ones,

Devout members of this Church of Saint George,

How worthy and right it is to pray today in this Church – pastored by the late Father Constantine Bebis, the twin brother of this legendary professor and scholar. Here, at the center of his family's life for many decades, we come together to lay to rest one of the giants of our precious School's faculty, a figure known to literally generations of priests.

Dr. George Bebis, known always to his students as "Dr. Bebis," has followed his beloved mother, brother and sister into the realm of eternity. Having lived a long and full life, he has merited the reward of the safe and salvific passage that the Church Fathers taught, and which he knew so well. He has passed from the pale glory of this world to the ineffable glory of the next. He has crossed the mystical Jordan to enter the land of the living.

Dr. Bebis was more than an institutional figure at Holy Cross. In many ways, he was the institution itself. His tenure alone at the School is an extraordinary testament to his dedication to Hellenic College and Holy Cross and his devotion to its students.

He came from Crete, an island of Apostolic significance, and left Rethymnon to encounter the world – but always for Christ and His Holy Church. Nearly seventy years ago, he graduated from Holy Cross with the first of two degrees, and went on to distinguish himself with advanced studies that showed him to be an impeccable scholar of Patristic history and theology. His work on Nestorius is still held to be among the finest ever written. His comprehension of his subject material was as vast as it was deep. But for all of his scholarly achievements, what I believe best describes him is not the pinnacle of his intellect, but rather his generosity as a teacher. For it was in teaching – in schooling generations of clergy – that his greatest joy was fulfilled, and his most durable legacy was established.

But what was his greatest accomplishment as a true Παιδαγωγός? Well, from what I have heard from his former students, and from what I myself learned in my semester teaching at the School some years ago, it was the way he inspired them to read the Fathers for themselves.

Dr. Bebis knew that it was not enough to read and learn about the subject called, “Patristics.” His teaching was designed to inspire students to engage the “mind of the Fathers” directly.

Like the First-Called Andrew, who brought his brother Peter immediately to Christ, and Philip, who invited Nathanael to “come and see,” Dr. Bebis introduced his students to the lifelong pursuit of encountering the Church Fathers. He knew that our clergy would be productive teachers of their flocks if they possessed the φρόνημα of the Fathers. And he knew that the best way to know the Fathers is to read them directly.

I am certain that I could call on any number of you present here today at these exequies, and you could tell a hundred tales of Dr. Bebis –

Of his love for the School,

Of his love for his fellow teachers,

Of his love for the students,

And, above all, of his love for the Church.

There was never a summons by his Church that he failed to answer.

There was never text, a briefing, a speech, an address, or a homily that he failed to deliver. Dr. Bebis was the inspiration – or in-breathing – of the love of the Church Fathers in countless souls, and his devotion to the Church was always unwaning in nature.

His enthusiasm, his encouragement and his energy planted the words of the greatest Theologians and Saints within the hearts and minds of generations. And the planting of these nourishing seeds of patristic wisdom and didactic ecclesiology has yielded many great harvests of rich spiritual fruit across our Sacred Archdiocese of America.

And so, as we escort our beloved Dr. Bebis to his earthly resting place, let us recognize that the labors of his remarkable mind and heart go on forevermore. Let us be grateful for this teacher of excellence – a most humble, diligent and sincere servant of the Church.

And let us lift up our voices to the Lord of Resurrection and Life, that He may grant unto our beloved brother, George, eternal rest among the Saints, and a joyful dwelling in the mansions of our Heavenly Father.

May he taste of the ineffable sweetness that emanates from our Lord’s everlasting glory in the Kingdom of Heaven, and may his memory truly be eternal! Amen.

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