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# Homily By His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America On the Feast of the Transfiguration & The Ordination to the Priesthood of Deacon Alexandros Douvres

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My beloved Deacon Alexander,

Today, you stand in the Holy House of your upbringing – the wonderful community of Zoodohos Peghe – in the presence of your family, friends, and your brothers and sisters in Christ. These are the days of the Virgin's Fast and Feast – the Holy Dormition. But within these fifteen days lies the foretaste of glory of the human nature she gave to her Son and God.

For you are being brought to the rank of Presbyter today on the Feast of the Transfiguration, the radiant and radiating Transfiguration of our Lord Jesus Christ on Mount Tabor. Where Peter, Iakovos and John scaled the heights with Him above the fertile plains of Galilee. Where Moses and Elias appeared out of the Heavens in the same effulgence that surrounded the Lord of Glory. Where the the Cloud of Light of the Holy Spirit descended and enveloped them. Where the Voice of the Father thundered and said: "This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased: Listen to Him." *

All of these ξένα ἀκούσματα and ξένα θεάματα are for you today, Deacon Alexandros. They are gifts for you to understand the Mystery that you rise to on this Holy and Sacred Day.

Your ministry will not commence immediately, as you and your beloved Eirene will set out for the Island of Crete, to spend a year developing your skills and talents. Consider this your climb up the mountain with other Disciples, for none of us is ever alone in ministry. We are always in community. In the wonderful Church of Crete, you will have the opportunity to understand our Orthodox Faith in the context of an ancient culture that has been Christian since the days of Saints Paul and Titus. This is an extraordinary opportunity to immerse your priesthood in the wellsprings of Sacred Tradition.

There, you will behold the glories of Orthodoxy that reflect the vision on Mount Tabor. The Saints are abundant. The Churches ubiquitous. The people, homogenous – not the pluralistic society you will face in this country upon your return. Therefore, my beloved Deacon Alexandros, learn from the Disciples who were privileged to witness so great a miracle as the Transfiguration. Be vigilant! Do not be overcome with spiritual drowsiness as were the Disciples, when the Lord was speaking with Moses and Elias. And do not try to capture your experiences as when Peter cried out: “Master, it is good for us to be here! Let us make three tabernacles, one for You, one for Moses and one for Elias!” – but he really did not know what he was saying. †

It is one of the most challenging dilemmas for the clergy: how to celebrate the Mystery of the Lord’s Divine Oeconomia, without trying to capture it for one’s own purposes. Peter wanted to imprison, in three tabernacles, what his mind could not comprehend. Sometimes, my dear Deacon, it is enough to simply stand in genuine and unalloyed awe before the Glory of the Lord – without judgment, without expectation, without opinion.

In your ministry, you will encounter those who wish to use our religion and its spiritual life to control others, because they cannot control their own passions and thoughts. But our purpose as Priests of the Most High God is to offer, as did Melchizedek to Abraham. We are not spiritual policemen, but healers, comforters and counselors. Our ministry is of the Gospel, and not of this world, where moth and rust corrupt, and where thieves break in and steal. ‡

Therefore, as you take up the Priesthood on this Day of Transfiguration, commit to your own transformation, day by day. Learn from this wondrous miracle of the Lord, that God’s glorious love for His world is beyond any comprehension or conception. Let your heart be moved by the Transfiguration that God accomplishes every day in the lives of your fellow human beings. And above all, do not encase these glorious moments in tabernacles of your own making. The Lord tabernacled among us –

ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν – so that we might be living temples of His glory. §

Always follow the example of the One Who is in the order of Melchizedek.** For He offered Himself for the life of the world, as we shall pray in a few moments in your first Consecration of the Holy Gifts as a Priest. We, His Holy Priesthood, can offer no less.

Amen.

* Matthew 17:5.
† Luke 9:33.
‡ Cf. Matthew 6:19.
§ Cf. John 1:14 and I Corinthians 3:16
** Psalm 109:5 (LXX) and the Eisodikon of the Feast of Christmas.

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