

27/09/2022

His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros Remarks at Centennial Banquet



Saint Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church Community Center
Seattle, Washington

Your Eminence, my beloved Brother in Christ and Concelebrant in the Holy Spirit,
Metropolitan Gerasimos,

Your Grace Bishop John and Reverend Clergy,

Esteemed Parish Council, Philoptochos, and Parish Organization Heads,

Dear Centennial Celebration Sponsors and All who have worked to bring about this
brilliant weekend,

Beloved Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

Coming from the Great Vespers to this Agape Banquet, which will lead into our
celebration of the Divine Liturgy tomorrow morning, is a beautiful arc of joy and
sanctity. All of you are to be congratulated for your many, and I am sure, toilsome

labors, to make this commemoration of the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Parish a reality.

As you all know, your anniversary coincides with the One Hundredth anniversary of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America becoming an Eparchy of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. When I think of the vast expanse of our Nation – and how our Church – even in 1922 – reached literally from “sea to shining sea,” I stand in awe and deep gratitude for those who came before us.

Given the coincidence, I look at the Saint Demetrios Parish here in Seattle as a microcosm of the Archdiocese. You are a Parish that is full of vibrancy and energy. Your liturgical schedule is lively. Your numbers – both of the stewardship ministries and Philoptochos – are impressive. Your activities for youth, seniors, and especially the fellowship groups – demonstrate a sincere and successful program of outreach to all the constituencies of the Parish. But above all of these marvelous aspects of Parish life, there is one thing that impresses me the most: the pairing of your Mission Statement and your Vision Statement.

In the former, you affirm as a community that your apostolate, your mission is to be a community known for “Loving God and One Another in Spirit and Truth.” This declaration is so eminently simple, but so acutely profound. Here, you lay hold of the two greatest commandments, as the Lord Jesus taught:

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your thoughts. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like the first: You shall love your neighbor as you love yourself.*

I rejoice that your community is able to look into the vast and glorious traditions of the Church and the Scripture, and to pinpoint what the Lord called “the one thing needful.” †

For He took these two commandments from separate books of the Torah – the first from Deuteronomy (6:4) and the second from Leviticus (19:18), and from them, He formed the axis of His Holy and Life-giving Cross, exemplifying perfect love of God and perfect love of neighbor.

In addition, to identifying this as the purpose for your Parish, you have followed it with your “Vision Statement,” which is nothing less than your roadmap to fulfill the mission:

“To Follow Jesus Christ; Make Disciples; and Minister to the Needs of One Another and the Community.”

So, what I find so encouraging about your parish, is that you have made four concrete proposals to accomplish your destiny in Christ:

- 1) You are committed to following the Lord, and to learn from Him.
- 2) You are committed to helping others learn from Him and become His followers.
- 3) You are committed to serving one another as loving brothers and sisters.
- 4) And finally, you are committed to serving the world around you.

This is a superb model for being the Church, not just having a Church. Therefore, my dear Christians of this wondrous Saint Demetrios Parish:

Allow me to commend you, to encourage you, and to bless you for the next hundred years. Your foundation is strong, fortified by the sacrifices of your forebears. Your present is active and engaged, as you know your mission and your vision is clear.

And so, like the arc of this celebration weekend, your future is radiant, and your prospects, like the Archdiocese, are very bright indeed.

In a hundred years, let us pray that for the Bicentennial of your Parish and the Archdiocese, the same arc of love, of faith, and of hope is still bending toward the Kingdom of Heaven. The Divine Liturgy that we will celebrate tomorrow is our taste and foretaste of that glory. And through the intercessions of the Holy Great-martyr and Myrrh-streamer Demetrios, it shall all come to pass.

Thank you, and congratulations to all.

* Matthew 22:37-39.

† Luke 10:42.

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