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## **Archbishop of America Elpidophoros on repatriation of priceless manuscript to N. Greece monastery: 'A miracle that can be explained only spiritually'**



The Archbishop of America, His Eminence Elpidophoros, on Thursday referred to a “... miracle that can be explained only spiritually”, as he described the repatriation, to the Monastery of Ikosifinissa, in northern Greece, of one of the oldest and best-preserved Greek-language Gospels in the world, handwritten at the end of the 10th century, and stolen from the Monastery during the Bulgarian occupation in March 1917.

His Eminence, who is visiting the Metropolis of Drama and representing Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, noted that “...the return of this particular manuscript to the Patriarchal and Stavropegic Monastery is a miracle that can only be explained spiritually...Personally, I believe it is the fruit of the prayer of the Monastery’s brotherhood.”

The Archbishop of America also conveyed the Ecumenical Patriarch's assurance that he will always take a personal interest in the return of all stolen relics, and that His All-Holiness instructed that all services of the Archdiocese of America be at the disposal of the Monastery in order to claim and repatriate other stolen artifacts that may have been sold in the United States.

The gospel, with serial number 220, had come into the possession of the Museum of the Bible in Washington D.C. in 2014 and was officially returned to the Holy Monastery, in the presence of the Archbishop of America and the chairman of the Museum, Steve Green.

As part of the repatriation ceremony, a Doxology Service was held and the protocol for the delivery and receipt of the manuscript was signed. The event was dedicated to reposed Metropolitan of Drama Pavlos, who, as the speakers reminded, contributed greatly to the return of the manuscript and fought for the retrieval of all stolen relics from the Monastery.