

03/10/2022

Remarks by His Eminence Metropolitan Cleopas of Sweden at the Event Honoring the Christian Choirs of the Syriac Aramean Parishes of Sweden St. Ephraem Cathedral in Södertälje



Your Eminence Benjamin Atas, Archbishop of the Syriac-Aramean Community of Sweden,

Reverend Fathers,

Esteemed Parish Council Members,

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

My dear children,

I am happy to be with you today at this decorous ceremony. Deeply moved, I express my thanks and appreciation to your spiritual father, His Eminence Archbishop Benjamin, for offering me the opportunity to join you and, together with the rest of tonight's guests, sample the fruits of your labor and this unique cultural product being expressed through music.

The human voice is the finest of all musical instruments, and songs serve as a teacher and guide, expressing our feelings and musically bringing together all humanity through the world of melodies.

Contemporary life appears to be centered on the future. It has its eye on the future, or rather, it races toward it, at dizzying speeds and with astounding achievements. But here at today's event, it is proven yet again that the Church does not alter its pace to march to the beat of the times. The Church is not the product of any one particular era, or the materialization of modern man's mentality, but rather, a world of its own that is stable and constant, founded on the site where the Cross was placed, there where the Creator of this world extended His arms and offered His blood and His embrace for our salvation.

My dear children, here at today's event, you "outdo one another in showing honor" (Romans 12:10), while at the same time offering us all a lesson in ecclesiastical ethos, considering that, through this effort, you "freely" capture the hearts of your fellow men and women, and invite them to sample the banquet of spiritual joy.

Together with the other resources that you will acquire in life, see that you do not forget that as Christians, you have yet another duty - that from your existence, there may proceed love, which provides those around you with freedom. Do not be afraid of your fellow men and women, but rather, embrace them and let them express themselves freely. We must realize that freedom is a prerequisite for things to function properly and for success to be attained. St. Isaac the Syrian writes that "we must proceed in our ministry in full freedom." (p. 120)

The Church is a sacred space where sanctity is produced. "Often times, people are attracted to God not because of the explanations someone offered to enlighten them, but rather, because in that person's face they were able to see joy, light, depth, seriousness, and love - all of which, in and of themselves, manifest God's presence and strength in the world" (Fr. Alexander Schmemmann, Great Lent, p. 121).

The United Nations proclaimed the year 1985 as the year of the youth. For us, however, ministering to the youth is not something to be done opportunistically or only on special occasions, but instead, systematically. Today's event is proof of all that I have just spoken about. The initiatives taken by my beloved Brother and friend His Eminence Archbishop Benjamin and his worthy aids, in conjunction with your dynamism and drive, lead to results like the one we are witnessing today. For

the Church, there is no such thing as the year of the youth or other temporal dedications, because its work extends unto eternity.

Children like yourselves, who have been raised in the Church from an early age, who have been nurtured by its hymns, or who participate in the opportunities provided to you by your parishes will not easily be led astray in life's journey or resort to eating the "carobs of sin," because you will continuously remember your spiritual home, the Church, and seek out the embrace of God – who takes on the role of the Father in the Parable of the Prodigal Son – and run to Him.

Fr. Alexander Schmemmann notes that liturgical life "speaks measuredly and melodiously; it employs formal, rhythmic gestures; it is clothed in colors and garments foreign to everyday life It is in the highest sense the life of a child, in which everything is picture, melody and song" (For the Life of the World).

Let us give glory to the name of the Trinitarian God, Who shows us worthy to serve the men and women of today, who in their desperation, are ready to take one last step. They are prepared either to leap into the depths of Hades or the arms of God. Here lies the goal of our common mission as clergy, theologians, educators, parents, volunteers, and faithful children of the Church – to provide our youth with such prospects that alongside us, they will find spiritual peace and mature in the instruction of the Lord.

The message of today's event is one of hope and optimism. At today's event, my dear children, you helped us discover a treasure, reminding us of Christ's words: "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Math. 6:21).

I convey to you all the warm congratulations and paternal love and care of His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, along with my heartfelt and grateful thanks for honoring me with your invitation and the opportunity to speak at your event.

May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the Communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you. Amen!

Metropolisofsweden