

10/10/2022

**ARCHEPISCOPAL ENCOMIUM By His Eminence  
Archbishop Elpidophoros of America At the 2022  
Athenagoras Human Rights Award Banquet  
Honoring His Beatitude Theodoros II Pope and  
Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa**



Your Beatitude Patriarch Theodoros II of Alexandria and All Africa,

Your Eminence Archbishop Demetrios

Most Reverend Metropolitans and Hierarchs,

Beloved Clergy and Presvyteres of our Church,

Honorable Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Esteemed Archons and Archons-elect,

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Tonight, we are privileged to have in our presence the living icon of the Great Church of Alexandria, His Beatitude Theodoros II, the 116th Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria. We are here to honor Him with the Athenagoras Human Rights Award – for His unwavering support of the Mother Church of Constantinople, and for His visionary mission across the Continent of Africa. We praise His Beatitude’s courageous stand for the Autocephaly of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine – a stand that is manifestly righteous and right!

But before we proceed with more tributes, and the awarding of the accolade, please allow me a few moments to extol this Apostolic See, founded by the Evangelist Mark.

In the Book of the Apocalypse, when the Revelator beholds the Throne of God, he sees, “within the throne and around the throne Four Living Beings teeming with eyes. The first Being was like a lion....”[\*] This Theriomorph is the symbol of the Patriarchate of Alexandria – the Winged Lion that roars in the Gospel of Saint Mark with the Good News of the Cross and the Resurrection.

The Apostolic foundation of the Most Holy Patriarchate of Alexandria – combined with the traditions of learning in the City founded by Alexander the Great, and exemplified by the Great Library – produced the greatest center for the flowering of Christian Theology the world has ever known. The famous Catechetical School of Alexandria knew such luminaries as Origen and Clement. The Monastic tradition appeared in the deserts of Egypt with Saint Anthony the Great and his many disciples.

But it was in the defense of the Orthodox faith by the predecessors of His Beatitude, that we behold most clearly His inspiration and vision.

Saint Athanasios the Great – the Unmovable! A deacon to Saint Alexander of Alexandria at the First Ecumenical Council, and throughout his tenure as Patriarch of Alexandria, the insurmountable and unconquerable Defender of Nicaea, enduring intense persecution, and exile after exile by the political authorities.

Our Patriarch Theodoros knows this same persecution, which has been relentless, because of His stand for the good canonical order of the Church – supporting the Ecumenical Patriarchate’s decision to grant Autocephaly to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, and thus, to restore millions of Ukrainians to the Canonical Church.

I think it is safe to say that His Beatitude is an admirer of the Slavic tradition; for He has much experience from his time as the Patriarchal Exarch in Odessa. He has had warm relationships with the Ukrainian and Russian Churches. But because of His righteous stance, the Moscow Patriarchate – which is supporting full-on aggression and violence against the Ukrainian People, as well as the illegal seizure of Ukrainian lands by sham elections at gunpoint – has uncanonically invaded the Continent of Africa, which is the complete ecclesiastical domain of the Most Holy Patriarchate of Alexandria.

But Patriarch Theodoros is as unmovable as was His holy predecessor Athanasios, and Cyril after him, who gave to posterity the title of “Theotokos” for the Virgin Mary.

You see, my friends, the weight and glories of the history of the See of Saint Mark are not easy to bear. But His Beatitude does so with such grace and dignity.

Let us remember, that his title, “Pope,” which also applies to the Bishop of Rome, is from the Greek word, Πάππας, which means, “father.” And His Beatitude is a true father to all of Africa.

Your Beatitude, You not only bear the marks of Your ancient predecessors, but You also stand in a line of Patriarchs of Alexandria, who hail from Your native island of Crete.

Two of the six Cretans who have come before You held both the Thrones of Constantinople and Alexandria in their one lifetime: Saint Cyril Lucaris – over whose canonization Your Beatitude presided in 2009; and Patriarch Meletios Metaxakis, who, when Ecumenical Patriarch, established the Sacred Archdiocese of America as an Eparchy of the Mother Church of Constantinople.

These two major figures from the history of both Patriarchates – Constantinople and Alexandria – add to the awareness of solidarity and unanimity fostered by Your Beatitude, and by His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew.

Thus, it is only fitting that Your Beatitude receives this high distinction of the Athenagoras Human Rights Award. Moreover, the fact that it is bestowed on the evening that commences Your Beatitude’s Eighteenth Anniversary of Election to the See of the Winged Lion, only magnifies the joy that we all feel.

And so, with these thoughts, and with the deepest respect for Your person, as well as for the Most Holy Patriarchate of Alexandria, I would like to express on behalf of

this assembly and the entire Archdiocese of America, our heartfelt congratulations for all of your accomplishments, together with our wholehearted prayers and best wishes for Your mission of sowing the seeds of the Orthodox Christian faith throughout Africa, and peace throughout the world.

ΠΟΛΛΑ ΤΑ ΕΤΗ ΣΑΣ, ΜΑΚΑΡΙΩΤΑΤΕ!

[\*] Revelation 4:6-7.

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