

17/10/2022

## **Address By His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America At the Ordination of His Grace Bishop-Elect Constantine of Sassima**



Beloved Brothers in the Holy Spirit,

Dear Clergy and Faithful,

Beloved Bishop-Elect of Sassima, Your Grace Constantine,

My dear brother, today we gather in the Archdiocesan Cathedral, to begin a new chapter in your lifetime of service to our Holy Orthodox Church. You are a precious son of another Cathedral, too - the Annunciation Cathedral in Baltimore. And I know that we have many faithful parishioners from there with us this morning as well.

There, in the wonderful Greek Orthodox community of Baltimore, you were reared in the faith by your parents. You served the late and much-loved Father Constantine Monios as an altar boy, a deacon and as his Assistant Priest, until his untimely passing. And thereafter, you took up the mantle of ministry at the Cathedral by serving this family – your family – with faithful, humble and devoted service.

My dear Brother, you have given your life to the Cathedral of

Baltimore. And I can only imagine how truly heart-rending it must be to arrive at this commencement of a new journey of faith.

But if I have learned anything about you, my beloved Bishop-Elect, it is that you are a man of principle, of hope, and most especially of love – love for your Church and love for all the flocks of the Great Shepherd of the sheep, our Lord Jesus Christ. Your election – and more specifically, your vocation to the episcopacy – is a test of this love, because you are now called to serve a flock that will be new to you, and you will be new to them.

There, you will assist our beloved Brother in Christ, Metropolitan Isaiah of Denver, who is now in his ninth decade of life, with over sixty years of ordained service to the Church. The Metropolis of Denver is very significant for our Archdiocese, because although it has the smallest population of any Metropolis, it is spread out over the largest expanse of territory. Your ministry there will be an invaluable help to His Eminence, and it will give the faithful of the Metropolis fresh perspectives, which you will bring from your long and fruitful pastoral experience in Baltimore.

Your election to the historic See of Sassima bears mentioning two important considerations. First, everyone should know that Sassima was the See to which Saint Gregory of Nazianzus – the Theologian who was to ascend the See of Constantinople – was first elected. Therefore, my dear Bishop-elect Constantine, always follow in his footsteps and nourish the faithful entrusted to you with the pure and unalloyed teachings of the Church.

Second, you know that your immediate predecessor was the late and ever-memorable Metropolitan Gennadios, with whom I worked at the

Phanar for many years, and held in high regard and deep affection. Indeed, he was an exemplary Hierarch. More than superbly educated. He was an active and

energetic representative of our Mother Church in all manners of ecumenical endeavors – even laboring at the very highest levels of the World Council of Churches and in ecumenical dialogues.

I would like for you to take inspiration from his truly catholic, universal openness to others, which was always tempered by his deep fidelity to the tradition and dogmas of our Holy Orthodox Church. In the far reaches of the West – where you will serve – you will encounter not only Christian brothers and sisters of varying traditions, but indigenous Peoples as well, who maintain their own spiritual cultures. A true theologian – one in the line and legacy of Gregory the Nazianzen – will be both dialogic, as well as pedagogic. We must listen to others while we teach and preach the Gospel. For as the Saint himself taught:

“We are not made for ourselves alone, we are made for the good of all our fellow creatures.”

Therefore, my beloved Bishop-elect Constantine, take courage in this monumental step to which you have been called. You are grounded in the holy See of Sassima. More than a name and a memory, it is infused with the spirit of your predecessors, whose prayers will strengthen you for the journey ahead.

Yes, the flock that you are being called to serve belongs to our Lord. But He commands us – His bishops – just as he commanded Peter, when He restored him in the Resurrection, from this threefold denial before the

Crucifixion. Always hold this dialogue and these words in your heart, as if the Lord were speaking them directly to you:

“Nourish My lambs.”

“Shepherd My sheep.”

“Pasture My sheep.” \*

The West is where so many Greek immigrant shepherds went to continue their way of life from the old country. But you will bring a deeper meaning to what it means to be a true and genuine Shepherd of the Holy Flock of the Lord.

May the Great Shepherd, our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ, grant you ample grace and wisdom, so that the high calling to be a Bishop of His Holy Church may always fill you with joy, light and peace.

Amen.

\* Cf. John 21:15-17.



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