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“This is a Creative Moment of the Church”: On the ‘Paradox’ and ‘Marvel’ of the Martyrdom of St. Demetrios the Myrrh-Streamer (Great Vespers, Jamaica, NY)



On Tuesday, October 25, the community of Saint Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church in Jamaica, New York, celebrated the Great Vespers of its patron saint: Saint Demetrios the Myrrh-Streamer. Hailing from Thessaloniki, the Great Martyr is known as an example of the “highest fidelity to God,” and though he was a high-ranking general in the army of the Roman Empire, when it became known that he was a Christian, it was his bravery in spiritual combat which was tested.

In his homily, His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros drew attention to the particular martyrdom of the Saint, who, pierced by a lance, underwent a manner of “torment and death that imitates the Lord.”

Recalling John 19:34-35 on the torture of Christ:

Εἷς τῶν στρατιωτῶν λόγχῃ αὐτοῦ τὴν πλευρὰν ἔνυξε, καὶ εὐθέως ἐξῆλθεν αἷμα καὶ ὕδωρ. Καὶ ὁ ἔωρακὼς μεμαρτύρηκε, καὶ ἀληθινὴ αὐτοῦ ἐστὶν ἡ μαρτυρία....

“One of the soldiers stabbed his side with a lance and there was an instant outpouring of blood and water. Indeed, he who saw it gives his testimony, and his testimony is truthful....

The Archbishop said, “In the flowing water and blood that came from the Lord’s side, we behold the essential and foundational Sacraments of the Church: Baptism and Eucharist. This is a creative moment of the Church, similar to the creation of Eve in the Book of Genesis, when it says:

“The Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and while he slept, God took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh; and from the rib which the Lord God had taken out of the man, He made woman....’ (Genesis 2:21-22)

“I hope that you see the similarities – Adam slept, and Eve was brought out of his side. Our Lord Jesus slept in death on the Cross, and from His side came forth His Bride – the Church – in the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion.

“Our Saint Demetrios was pierced for the sake of the Lord, as the hymn we chanted says. You see, my beloved Christians, how the Holy Demetrios participates in the formation of the Church through his martyrdom. He gives his body to the Body of Christ and endures the same sufferings as the Lord, so that he might establish the Church throughout the oikoumene. And as we all know, the name of Saint Demetrios is honored around the world, and his sacrifice has proven victorious.”
(Full Homily)

Following the service, altar boys received an Archpastoral blessing and small cross. Proistamenos Rev. Protopresbyter Konstantinos Kalogridis and Parish Council President Constantine Doukas were also honored with the Archdiocesan Centennial icon of the Sower. His Eminence visited the community after returning earlier that morning from London, where he had accompanied His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew at the Centenary Celebrations of the Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain.



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