

08/11/2022

GREETING By His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America At the Celebratory Banquet for the Golden Anniversary of the Greek Orthodox Church of Saint Barbara



Your Grace Bishop Apostolos of Medeia,

Protopresbyter Paul Pappas,

Parish Council President Savvas Kyriacou,

Esteemed Philoptochos Sisterhood, and Parish Organization Heads,

Dear Golden Jubilee Sponsors, Archons and Members of Leadership 100,

Beloved Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

We have just come from the Divine Liturgy, where the spiritual trumpet of our faith has sounded, signaling this Jubilee celebration of the founding of Saint Barbara here in Toms River.

As Patriarchal Vicar of the Holy Metropolis of New Jersey, I am delighted to be with you today to observe this solemn and happy occasion. Solemn, because the jubilee is a time of reflection on the future. And happy, because we rejoice as a community at your journey thus far.

This milestone of fifty years is a generational occurrence. Many have come and gone from the parish over this span of time. We remember with love and appreciation those gone before us; for they each gave unique gifts.

It does not go without notice that your anniversary is exactly half of the celebration that our Sacred Archdiocese has enjoyed this year. It was in 1922 that our Ecumenical Patriarchate granted the Tomos – the Synodical Decision – to bring the Church in America under the protective wings of the Mother and Holy Great Church of Christ.

And fifty years halfway through this centenary, the Greek Orthodox Christians of Toms River banded together to incarnate the Body of Christ in this community – choosing the name of the Great-Martyr Saint Barbara, whose example of faith and courage has endured through the centuries.

As we pass this day in kind and thoughtful remembrances, allow me to mention the hierarch who was here at your beginning – the ever-memorable Bishop, and later Metropolitan, Silas. I am sure that many of you can call him to mind – the first Bishop of the Diocese (now, Metropolis) of New Jersey – and, in truth, the very reason this ecclesiastical province was created, at the recommendation of the blessed Archbishop Iakovos.

As I reflect on the hierarchs and clergy who have served, I am struck by the fact that there are so many faithful, decent, honest, noble laymen and laywomen who energize our communities. And that is certainly true here in Toms River. You are all to be congratulated for your devotion to this parish, and your sacrificial generosity that has made Saint Barbara and all her ministries possible.

If I may, just for a moment, reflect on one aspect of your Parish. Your community is part of a wider township that faces the great Atlantic Ocean.

This was the vast expanse of sea and sky that our precious and intrepid Greek pioneers traversed to come to this great country and land of opportunity. I feel a great debt to all of these Greek pathfinders; for they blazed the trail of success in America for all who came after them. I do not know the names of your forefathers and foremothers who made the sacrifices, but I ask you to pause for a moment of silence in their memory. (PAUSE) They must never, ever be forgotten. And I sense in this room, at this moment, that they never will be. You are a loving and mindful community, and it shows.

Therefore, let us enjoy this moment of jubilee in jubilation. Let us celebrate the fifty-year mark in the march of this wonderful parish. And let us envision what the next fifty years will look like, so that we may leave to your children and grandchildren a dynamic, energetic and optimistic community of faith – based in the love of God, and in love for one another, facing every challenge with the courage of your Heavenly Protector, Saint Barbara the Great-Martyr.

Through her intercessions, may we all attain to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of everlasting life. Amen.

Thank you, and again, congratulations to all!

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