

09/01/2023

HOMILY By His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America At the Immersion of the Precious Cross on the Feast of Theophany Spring Bayou



My beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord,

Once again, we come to the Spring Bayou for our sacred tradition of the Immersion of the Holy and Precious Cross. The Cross enters the waters to sanctify the waters; to redeem the waters. To make of the bitter tastes of this world – which is called “Marah” in the Book of Exodus – a sweetness to surpass even the finest honey.

It is said that when the Israelites had crossed over the Red Sea, they went for three days in the wilderness with no water to drink, until they came to Marah. But the springs there were bitter and undrinkable. And Moses, obedient to God, cast a tree that God had showed him into the waters, and they became sweet. And the People were refreshed and satisfied. [*]

Today, we follow this example. For God has shown us time and again what tree will bring forth sweetness; what tree will bestow happiness; what tree will instill goodness in our lives. And it is the Tree of the Cross – τοῦ Σταυροῦ δὲ τὸ ξύλον.

Today, we cast the Tree of Life into this bayou, to manifest not only our obedience to the Lord, but in response to our own thirst for goodness and righteousness as well.

The Israelites had gone parched and dry for three days. Think of it – to go without a drop of water for three whole days. But some have gone thirsty for their entire life. And the only water they have found on their journey of life are the bitter springs of Marah.

That is why we have come to the bayou today. To sweeten every person’s experience with this plunging of the Holy Cross into the waters, and to open the floodgates of spiritual refreshment.

The young divers give us hope – that each of us can lay hold of the victory of the Cross. As they brave the depths to seek out the Cross, let each of us find the courage to descend into the depths of our own souls, so as to discover the meaning of the Cross in our own lives.

My beloved Christians,

Let us all take that plunge! Just as these marvelous young people dive into the depths to retrieve the Holy Cross, may we lay hold of it for ourselves as well. May we embrace the Precious and Life-giving Cross, and raise it as the Standard of our life. In this way, we shall find the refreshment that never perishes, and becomes a fountain within our own souls, as the Lord promised.[†]

Through the Power of the Holy, Precious and Life-giving Cross! Amen!

[*] Exodus 15:22-27.

[†] Cf. John 7:37-38.

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