

02/03/2023

GREETING By His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America To the San Francisco Metropolis Bay Area Clergy



Your Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco,

Your Grace[s],

Dear brothers Christ,

Καλή Σαρακοστή!

Yesterday, I was with the brothers in Sacramento, and was very impressed by their dedication and enthusiasm for our season of preparation for Holy Pascha. Today, I have the pleasure to be her with you - the Bay Area clergy. But allow me to say this about your beloved Metropolitan Gerasimos. His Eminence is a pastor's pastor. His love for all of you, his devotion to serving your needs, and his constant desire to be of help to his clergy, is very moving for me to behold.

Thank you, my good brother, for the ministry of Christ that you have brought to this vibrant Metropolis all these years. Your archpastoral care for the flock of Christ here in the Western States is an example for us all.

Indeed, the example of your Metropolitan is a shining illustration of the pastoral care written by Saint Gregory the Great, in his classic, Liber Regulae Pastoralis, the "Book of Pastoral Rule." I wholeheartedly recommend the text to all of you. Like the "Ladder" for Monastics, this would be a good read every Lent. In chapter five of this Book, Saint Gregory describes the clergy as those who fulfill the prototype of the Levirate Marriage, where the brother must marry the wife of his deceased brother, and raise up children unto his name.

And is this not what we do? We, who are the younger brothers of the One Who gave Himself up for the life of the world? Do we not raise up children in His Holy Name, calling them, “Christians,” when they come up from the Fountain of Baptism, which is the matrix of the Church?

We read about this strange custom of the Levirate Marriage in the Gospel Reading for the Matins of Holy Tuesday. The Sadducees confront our Lord with the story of the woman who married seven brothers. They try to entrap Him with their legal arguments, and are befuddled when the Lord gives His accusers His final pronouncement:

“He is not the God of the dead, but of the living!”[1]

What a magnificent ending to this story! Christ is the Elder Brother Who willingly dies for us. But as the One Risen from the dead, He empowers our ministries to raise up children to His Glorious Name. What a privilege this is for us, my fellow brethren, to be granted such special grace.

Therefore, as we journey through this Lenten season, let us remember our awesome responsibility and duty to raise up, train, educate and lead the children of our Elder Brother. For He died and rose again to make the whole human family, to be the family of God.

Thank you!

Και πάλιν, Καλή Σαρακοστή, και Καλό Πάσχα!

Photo: Kostas Petrakos

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