

06/03/2023

Message by His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America For the Memorial Service in Memory of the Victims of the Tragic Train Collision In Tempi



Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ,

Today is a day dedicated to the souls of all those who have fallen asleep, as well as a day of immense mourning and sincere meditation. For it is with deep sorrow that we offer up prayers to the Lord of the living and the dead on behalf of the large group of individuals who perished in the tragic train crash at Tempi, Greece, a municipality in the greater region of Larissa. It is a rather unfortunate accident caused by human error and negligence in making necessary upgrades to the infrastructure of the railroad network and its systems. And I am saddened that we did not pray in advance to the Lord — first and foremost, I, myself — to protect our people from these kinds of catastrophes.

Indeed, this is an unfathomable tragedy that oftentimes brings to our very lips the impulsive utterance of the unanswerable question, “why?” It is a tragedy that tests our faith and hope by placing them into question, and it reminds us of the words of

the Apostle Paul: “so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.” How, though, can you not weep, lament and grieve for these young kids — students mostly — who began their journey home, but instead ended up unexpectedly at their final resting place? How can you begin to comfort the relatives of these unfortunate victims, who have suddenly lost forever their beloved children, parents, friends, siblings, spouses and entire families? The human mind cannot help but come to a pause when confronted with the barren wasteland of death and the silence facing all those awaiting an answer to the persistent question, “why?!”

The words of the great John Chrysostom come to mind: “On this account, I wail and lament, not disbelieving the Resurrection, but being left destitute of support, and having lost my protector, my companion, who shared with me in all things — my comforter — on this account, I mourn. I know that he will rise again, but I cannot bear the intermediate separation.” (PG 62, 431:10)

My beloved brethren,

Words are futile at such a sacred and solemn moment. However, I assure you that even though I am currently in the Queen of Cities, my thoughts and prayers are with you today at this prayerful gathering for the repose of all these souls that perished so unjustly, and for the consolation of their friends, families, relatives and loved ones. With eyes wearied by tears of grief and sorrow, but with hope in the Resurrection as well, let us join together in offering the following heartfelt petition to the Lord: “having realized the shortness of life, we ask of You, O Christ, to grant rest to the departed, as well as great mercy to our souls.” (Funeral Service, Idiomelon in Mode 2)

Your fervent supplicant before

the Lord of the living and the dead,

† ELPIDOPHOROS

Archbishop of America

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