

06/03/2023

Greeting At the Luncheon with Parish Leadership, Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral (San Francisco, CA)



Your Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco,

Your Grace[s] and Reverend Father[s],

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Καλή Σαρακοστή!

Thank you for arranging this luncheon and for our time together here today. These moments, when I have the opportunity to exchange ideas and dialogue with Parish leadership, are very precious to me. I am usually asked a lot of questions, but somehow - I would say by God's grace - I come away with much more than I give. And it's because you, the dedicated laywomen and laymen of the Church, inspire your clergy - whether the local priest or the Archbishop - by your love of Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church.

We have now entered into the arena of the Holy and Great Lent, a time of intense spiritual struggle. In our modern world, with all the distractions and the short attention span that we cultivate through social media, it is a real challenge to engage our parishioners in a meaningful way.

That is why the lay leadership of the local community is so important.

Your example, your encouragement, and your energy have far-reaching consequences in the life of the parish.

The faithful expect the clergy to be committed to the work of the Church. But when they see you, their fellow parishioners enrolled at every level of ecclesial life, it inspires and challenges them to look at their own involvement. And as you, the leadership, reach out to your fellow parishioners, your invitation for them to get involved is sometimes the difference between their opportunity to serve, or to sit back and let others do it for them.

As the Church, we are the Body of Christ, and every member is vital to the healthy functioning of the body. Everyone is valuable. Everyone is important. Everyone is needed. Everyone is wanted.

There is always room at the table of the Lord for all – young and old, rich and poor, experienced and novice alike.

Therefore, my dear friends, as we embrace this season of Great Lent, be sure to embrace every member of your communities with the love of which we sing on the Holy Night of Pascha – καὶ ἀλλήλους περιπτυξώμεθα.

Thank you very much for your presence and participation here today. I wish you and all the precious faithful of this wonderful Metropolis of San Francisco a very blessed and spiritually prosperous Lenten journey.

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