

Archbishop Elpidophoros Archdiocesan District Clergy-Laity Assembly Invocation, Address, & Close



Almighty Lord, You have created all things in wisdom. In Your inexpressible providence and great goodness, You have brought us to these saving days of the Holy Fast, for the purification of our souls and bodies, for control of our passions, and in the hope of the Resurrection. After forty days, You delivered into the hands of Your servant Moses the tablets of the law in characters divinely traced. Enable us also, O Good One, to fight the good fight, to complete the course of the Fast, to keep the Faith inviolate, to crush underfoot the heads of unseen tempters, to emerge victors over sin, and to come, without reproach, to worship Your Holy Resurrection.

For blessed and glorified is Your most honorable and majestic name, of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forevermore. Amen.

ADDRESS:

Your Graces,

Very Reverend Archdiocesan Chancellor, Archimandrite Nektarios Papazafiropulos

Reverend Chancellor of the Direct Archdiocese, Protopresbyter Elias Villis,

Reverend Fathers and Presbyteras,

Delegates to the Clergy Laity Assembly,

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Once again, as we did last year at this time, we find ourselves under the patronage and protection of the Great Archangels. Last year it was Archangel Michael in Port Washington. Now, I want to thank the Clergy and Lay Leadership of the Archangels Church of Stamford for their Abrahamic hospitality and welcome. They do justly to the memory of Protopresbyter George Poulos, whose presence is all around us, and

who will always be missed by those of us lucky enough to have known him.

We are gathered in our Archdiocese District Clergy Laity Assembly to continue and augment the work of the Church in our region of the country, a region of the Sacred Archdiocese of America that sets the tone for ministry from coast to coast. I want to express my appreciation to all the clergy and laity who assist in the District's activities and programs, as I have a Nation to attend to, and your help is vital to our success.

I am not going to review the past year of 2022, the Centennial of our Archdiocese, except to say that all of you contributed mightily to the achievements of that celebration. The Archdiocesan District pulled together, and I believe that we held one of the most memorable Clergy Laity Congresses in our history. Additionally, the Consecration and the subsequent complete opening of the Saint Nicholas National Shrine at the rebuilt World Trade Center, made our One Hundredth Anniversary a highly significant year.

Yet, there is another institution of our Archdiocese right here in the backyard of the Archdiocesan District: Saint Michael's Home. The vision and mission of the Home has evolved – and I want to give a special word of praise to my Hierarchical brother, His Grace Bishop Andonios of Phasiane. He has shepherded this vision and mission with love, care, and true diligence for over two decades. Under his watchful eye, Saint Michael's Home is relocating and expanding in Uniondale, New York, right in the midst of the Archdiocesan District's Long Island Communities. Perhaps the most densely Greek Orthodox region in the entire country.

I know that we have many institutions and ministries that are vital to our Church, but I want all of you to take Saint Michael's Home to heart, and help Bishop Andonios and his outstanding Board of Trustees and faithful donors over the “finish line,” as they say. Now is the time – *Νῦν ὁ Καίρος* – to complete this major initiative and set an example for the entire Archdiocese of love and care for our seniors.

We will be listening to many presentations today, and I'm particularly grateful for the presence of the President of Hellenic College and Holy Cross, our dear friend, George Cantonis, from whom we shall hear later on. As in all initiatives of our Church, we are constantly evolving and innovating, so bear this in mind as you take in the information that will be shared. I do know that there is much interest in the Charter process, and that will be our first presentation following my remarks.

As we are now fast approaching Holy Week and the Glorious Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, I pray that each of your communities will have a blessed and

spiritually fulfilling celebration. These holy days have such a special place in the hearts of our faithful.

This is why I especially commend all the clergy and the lay leaders for your dedication to the fullness of the Holy Week liturgical commemorations. They are the moments when our faithful are transported in mind and heart by the very beauty of these services. This sacred week is nothing less than the spiritual mountaintop of our communal worship.

I am also very proud of the progress that the Archdiocesan District has achieved, in bringing more and more faithful into service with one another. I rejoice at the increased participation at every level and every age throughout the network of parishes.

My dear Friends:

One year ago I reminded you of the definition of our Tradition by the late historian and teacher, Jaroslav Pelikan:

Our Orthodox Tradition, he said, “is the living faith of the dead,” not the “dead faith of the living.”[*] These words ring truer today than ever, as seekers come into our parishes desirous of the living faith of Orthodox Christianity. Everything that we do, that we say, and that we intend, must be built around this “living faith.” And we are the ones charged with keeping the Body of Christ healthy and able to embrace wider and wider circles of souls.

May God always grant us the wisdom and the will to fulfill this high calling in Christ – to the glory of His Holy Name. Amen.

CLOSING REMARKS:

In closing today, I again wish to thank our host parish of the Holy Archangels, and all of you, the delegates and participants of the Clergy Laity Assembly of our Archdiocesan District.

We have much to be grateful for, and so much to share with the world.

I pray that God will bless you, and bless your families throughout the remainder of the Great and Holy Lent, keeping you in His grace and love, so that you attain His Holy Resurrection on the sacred night of the Holy Pascha!

May the Good Lord bless us all! Amen.

Photos: GOARCH/Dimitrios Panagos

[*] Interview with U.S. News & World Report, July 26, 1989.

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