

24/04/2023

## **Archbishop Elpidophoros of America -Great Vespers of the Feast of Saint George and Saint Thomas**



My Beloved Brothers and Sisters in the Risen Christ,

Χριστὸς Ἀνέστη! [and in response: Ἀληθῶς Ἀνέστη!]

Christ is Risen! [and in response: Truly He is Risen!]

Χριστὸς Ἀνέστη! [and in response: Ἀληθῶς Ἀνέστη!]

I am delighted to be here at this wonderful and beautiful parish of Saint George the Great-Martyr for the Great Vespers of the Feast. Your love for this most beloved Saint of our Church is manifest in every face I see.

We are so very blessed by our Risen Lord to have celebrated Holy Week and Pascha with the complete panoply of our liturgical services. As you all know, since April 23rd has come after the Holy Pascha – during Lent, the festivities of Saint George are kept on April 23rd. And now, at the conclusion of Bright Week, we celebrate your Heavenly Patron on a Sunday, sharing the day with the Apostle Thomas.

In his Apolytikion, Saint George is called “τῶν αἰχμαλώτων ἐλευθερωτής, τῶν πτωχῶν ὑπερασπιστής, τῶν ἀσθενούντων ἰατρός” – “the one who sets the captives free, the defender of those in poverty, and the physician of those facing infirmity.”

His mighty deeds are the equals to the praises we sing. For if you consider his fame around the world, you will truly be astonished. From the Isle of England, where he is considered to be the Patron Saint of the Kingdom, to the Island of Büyükdada, in the Sea of Marmara, near my birthplace in Constantinople. There, at the Greek Orthodox Monastery of St. George, tens of thousands of Muslims make a pilgrimage every year. They come to make votive offerings at the place – the sacred τόπος, of this most famous Christian Saint, famous even in the Muslim world! The country of Georgia and the Georgian Orthodox bear his name. Indeed, everywhere you go, you will find your patron, Saint George.

And why does the world remember him so? If you know the story of his martyrdom, then you know it was very long, very painful, and very public. It was during the last great persecution by the pagan Roman Emperors, Diocletian – just a few years before the victory of Saint Constantine and the legalization of Christianity.

Saint George was a great military commander, and his martyrdom became famous because he never wavered in his faith in Christ. He is the Trophy-Bearer of Love, because his love for Christ was his greatest weapon for the truth. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Saint George was victorious over death. By choosing to die for His Lord and Savior, he conquered hatred, envy, and injustice. No one remembers the name of his tormentors today, but the Name of George echoes across the globe.

Therefore, my beloved Christians, let us rejoice in the light and the love of the Great-Martyr and Trophy-Bearer George on this day, and every day.

Especially in this season of Pentecostarion, when joy fills the Church at every Liturgy when we declare the Resurrection, we rejoice in the praises for Saint George.

We give thanks for his witness of love and truth, and we pray for his intercessions

on our behalf, and on behalf of the whole world.

And we give thanks for this Saint George Parish in New Britain, where the Greek Orthodox Faith is flourishing and serving the world.

By the holy prayers of the Great-Martyr and Trophy-Bearer George, may we ever be granted worthy to bear the name of Christian, and to glorify his sacred Martyrdom.

Amen!

Χριστὸς Ἀνέστη! [and in response: Ἀληθῶς Ἀνέστη!]

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