

Archbishop Elpidophoros - Remarks at the Doxology for the Greek Independence Parade In the Presence of the Presidential Guard



Beloved Brothers and Sisters in the Risen Christ,

Χριστὸς Ἄνεστη! [and in response: Ἄληθῶς Ἄνεστη!]

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

Χριστὸς Ἄνεστη! [and in response: Ἄληθῶς Ἄνεστη!]

Today is the Sunday of the Holy Myrrh-Bearers, a day of remembrance - of remembering the sacrifice of the Cross and Tomb, and the Resurrection on the Third Day. In fact, the Gospel we read in the course of the Divine Liturgy contains the very same Gospel with which we proclaim the Resurrection at the Holy Pascha.

The Holy Myrrh-Bearers - mostly women but at least two men - traversed a very short distance: from Golgotha, to the Stone of Anointing, to the Garden Tomb - barely one hundred paces. But their emotional distance was much, much farther.

They went from the pain of the Cross, to the mourning of the Anointing, to the closure of the Burial. However, like every page of human history, it is God Who writes the final word.

We will also traverse a relatively short distance today, when we march with pride and patriotism in honor of Greek Independence Day. For us, the march is one of Resurrection, of the Re-Birth of the Greek Γένος. But like those Holy Myrrh-bearers who could not forget the suffering that preceded the triumph, I ask all of us to also remember the struggle – the sweat, the blood, and the tears that poured from our Ethnos, to achieve the liberation of the lands of our fathers and mothers.

We have as our witnesses today, the noble Warriors of Hellas standing in our midst – the mighty Evzones. Their very appearance, their uniforms, their “well-girt” silence – bear witness to the struggles of over two hundred years ago. But this was not a straight line, a short distance between two points.

For some of our Island Brethren, their victories to rejoin the League of Hellenism were not accomplished until after the Second World War in the last century – even with the lifetime of some standing here today. It is not enough for us to praise the Re-Birth of the Hellenic People, and to cheer the present moment. We must remember our past. We must literally “re-member,” re-connect to the history from which we have come, and which we celebrate today. The Twenty-Fifth of March is not a once-a-year phenomenon, as beautiful as this day is. It is the essence of our heritage, and the legacy that we have inherited from those who gave their “last full measure,” so that we might enjoy liberty.

You see, my beloved Christians, the presence of the Evzones is much more than an adornment to our festivities. They are – first and foremost – Hoplites of the Revolution, Guardians of the dignity of our sacred dead. Their daily march is to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier – το Μνημείο του Αγνώστου Στρατιώτη – where they stand at absolute attention, listening to the echoes of Greek Heroes from ages past. They know well the history of the centuries of suffering that led to the Resurrection of our Γένος.

Our march today on the most famous Avenue of New York City, is of a different caliber, but inspired by same love for Greece. There will be cheering, and applause, and music. But let us listen carefully and drink in the truth of our Hellenic soul – what Pericles spoke of five hundred years before the Birth of our Savior – that freedom was happiness, and courage was freedom. [1]

Let us recommit this day – at this Doxology – in the presence of God and sustained

by the example of these heroic Evzones – that we will find the courage to defend our liberty and the essence of our democracy. For such freedom paves the way to true happiness – the happiness that we have such opportunity to pursue here in America, the Nation that took every democratic ideal of Greece, and has tried to realize them for every citizen.

My beloved Christians:

Today is day is an auspicious day; a day of celebration and rejoicing, but let us be grounded in the sacrifices of the past.

The Holy Myrrh-Bearers had witnessed the fullness of our Lord's sacrifice upon the Cross. They advanced from the Cross to the Tomb with heaviness and awe. They did not realize the Resurrection was less than 72 hours away, but they returned to the Tomb and found it so.

Today, as you march in the Parade, think of our beloved Evzones, and their daily march of solemnity to that other cenotaph. They know the Resurrection of Greece has been accomplished. But it must be cherished. Protected. And upheld for the generations yet to be born.

Therefore, follow their noble example, and let us all recommit to the health, strength, and future of Hellenism in our lives.

My sisters and brothers:

Ζήτω τὸ Είκοσιένα!

Ζήτω ἡ Ἑλλάς.

Ζήτω τὸ Ἑλληνικὸ Ἐθνος.

Photo: GOARCH/Dimitrios Panagos

[1] Περικλέους Ἐπιτάφιος, Θουκυδίδου Ἰστοριῶν, Β' XLIII.

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