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Archbishop Elpidophoros of America Offers Keynote Address at Commencement Ceremony at Athens College



On Wednesday, July 12, 2023, His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America offered the Keynote Address at the 94th Commencement Ceremony at Athens College, a premiere high school established in 1925 in the Psychiko suburb of Athens, Greece. Its founders— Emmanuel Benakis and Stephanos Delta, with the support of prominent American philhellenes— combined American and Greek educational systems and aimed to teach Greek students from both Greece and abroad.

Fittingly, the school's "College Them of the Year" for 2022-23 is Athens College - Greek Diaspora: A Long-Lasting, Mutual Connection.

Beginning with "home" footage— submitted by the Greek American community—of this year's exhilarating Greek Independence Parade under torrential rain in New York City, His Eminence explained how the Greek American community's commitment to Hellenic values is inextricably linked to its Orthodox faith. From the first parish in New Orleans (1866) to the creation of the Archdiocese of America (1921) to the rebuilding of St. Nicholas Church and National Shrine at Ground Zero

(2022), churches have nurtured community, survival and growth, empowerment, and a vibrant relationship with both a new home (the US) and a former home (Greece). The sheer number of people marching with their church community at a Greek parade in any city will hint at just as much.

“Every time I march in a Greek Independence Parade, I experience it as more than just a walk on the asphalt of American cities,” Archbishop Elpidophoros said. “I imagine it as the continuation of a course in the trajectory of History. A journey that begins in the depths of time, on the streets of all cities, where there is a Greek community. That is, everywhere. Where there is a Greek Orthodox church and parish. That is, everywhere. Where Hellenism grew and grew stronger. That is, everywhere. And where it gained recognition and confidence and representation in American society. That is, everywhere!”

His Eminence concluded with photo and video from the annual Greek Independence Celebration at the White House — an invitation, he reminded, which is extended to just two ethnic communities in the United States, and which began in 1987 during the tenure of Archbishop Iakovos, whose expression of Orthodox values in American public life, particularly in marching for civil rights in Selma with the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. over twenty years earlier, made him an icon of the Greek community’s civic engagement.

Today, the White House celebration reflects both the rich history and the dynamism of the Greek American community and is a time and a place where “we stand together with the President of the United States, to represent our country, our culture and our Orthodox faith— our tradition. We are the continuers of this tradition until we pass it on to the next generations. To you, our children!” said His Eminence.

While in Greece, the Archbishop will also make his first official visit to Ionian Village, the camping ministry of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America and another long-lasting and beloved bridge between Greece and the United States.



Photos: Athens College

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