

His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros Remarks at the Celebratory Mass Cathedral Basilica Santa María la Antigua



Your Excellency Archbishop Ulloa, beloved brother in Christ,

Most Reverend Hierarchs,

Her Excellency Janaina Tewaney, Minister of Foreign Affairs,

Her Excellency Jamira Gozaine, National Director of Immigration

Your Excellency Miroslava Rosas, Ambassador of Panama to the Holy See,

Dear Sisters and Brothers in the Lord

Today is a day that will be enshrined in the temple of my heart for the rest of my life. To be with you at this solemn and celebratory Mass for the five hundred and tenth year of the patronage of your Celestial Protectress, Santa María La Antigua. It is an honor and a spiritual delight for me as Archbishop of America, and as a simple Christian.

The magnificence of this Cathedral Basilica testifies to your devotion to the Blessed Virgin, who presides high above the altar, in the image that we Greek Orthodox call – Πλατυτέρα τῶν Οὐρανῶν – “She Who is More Spacious than Heaven.” For She contained within her holy womb, the fullness of God, in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Santa María La Antigua holds her Divine Son and receives her crown as she looks upon all of Panama with love and compassion.

My heart is filled with gratitude to you, Archbishop Ulloa, for your warm and fraternal invitation, and your most gracious welcome. And I see in the faces of all those who fill this Basilica, the goodness of the noble People of Panama.

I read somewhere, that when His Holiness Pope Francis was coming to Panama in 2019, and the Cathedral was being readied for the Papal Visit, a golden tomb of bees, complete with gilt wings, was discovered in the reredos during the

refurbishment. This marvelous discovery reminds me that all of us are, as the Poet Dante says:

“like bees that in a single motion swarm

And dip into the flowers, then return

To Heaven’s hive where their toil turns to joy....”*

Your Excellency:

You, and all your pious bishops, clergy, and faithful Christians, have welcomed me into your “hive” with such love, such openness, such warmth and with such true humanity.

My heart is filled with thanksgiving, especially to Santa María La Antigua, whom I pray will always bless you and this special Nation with God’s peace, abundant prosperity of body and soul, and with all the fruits of the Holy Spirit, that so evidently flourish in this place.

Thank you, and may the Good Lord bless you all!

* Paradiso, Canto XXXI: 7-9.

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