

15/09/2023

His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America Address at the Ordination on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross Of Gabriel Galifianakis to the Holy Diaconate



Beloved Sub-Deacon Gabriel,

Here, in the presence of Their Eminences and Their Graces, in the presence of the Faculty and Student Body, and indeed the entire blessed Community of Hellenic College and Holy Cross, on the Feastday of our sacred and beloved Σχολή ...

You, Sub-deacon Gabriel, present yourself – body, soul, heart, and mind to the Lord of all, to receive the laying on of hands, and enter into the ranks of the Clergy as a Deacon.

I want you to pause and reflect on this moment:

For it is a moment of the manifest fullness of the Church, as we behold the pleroma of all the ranks of the clergy and the laity in harmony.

And it is a moment of grace and of love for you, and for your wonderful spouse, Samantha – a moment where you are supported and sustained by loving prayers

from around the country, by the intercessions of the Saints and Angelic Hosts, and by the fellowship of Hellenic College and Holy Cross, which has brought you to this crossroads of your life.

You come to ordination today because you have been drawn to this wonderful and sacred vocation. For the Lord did say:

Κἀγὼ ἐὰν ὑψωθῶ ἐκ τῆς γῆς, πάντας ἐλκύσω πρὸς ἑμαυτόν.

And I, if I be exalted – lifted up – from the earth, I will draw all people to Myself. *

This is why we raise the Cross of our Lord today! To draw all people to His loving embrace. To manifest His sacrifice and His Passion, which so ardently burn for the salvation of every human person – and indeed, for all of creation. To remind each and every soul who witnesses the Elevation and Exaltation that our destiny is not confined to this earth; for He is lifted up from the earth to become our ladder to Heaven! A Ladder of Divine Ascent that opens the gates of eternal life to us – a ladder that connects us in its vertical arm to God Himself, and in its horizontal arm to one another.

This is the Cross that we bow deeply before today. This is the Cross that we are called to uplift in our own lives, for we are also called to carry our own crosses.

Beloved Sub-Deacon Gabriel: your ordination occurs today, on the Feast of the Universal Exaltation of the Holy Cross, because you have accepted the call to ministry, that countless others have in the ages before you. And it is not only the ordained who are called to raise up the Cross of Christ in their lives, but every Christian – every man, woman, and child! We all share in this divinely ordained vocation!

However, for us who have decided to dedicate our working lives to the mission of the Gospel, and to labor within the Holy House of the Church, we have a special responsibility to raise the Cross with integrity, with zeal according to knowledge, and with intensity. For we have taken up the path to permeate the world with the Apostolic teaching of the Christ.

What then, dear Gabriel, is your responsibility, your duty? How will your own elevation of the Holy Cross in your life and ministry draw all people that you encounter to the Lord of Glory?

First, you must be true to your own voice. Your Archangelic Namesake spoke the truth of God, even when there were doubters. Zacharias did not believe that his

wife, the blessed Anna, could conceive. And even the Holy Theotokos wondered (in here innocence) about how she could conceive and bear the Son of God. Yet, the Archangel spoke with authority, rooted in the truth of God.

Therefore, Sub-deacon, you must also learn to speak with authority in accordance with the Tradition of the Fathers and the Apostolic Teaching. Do not quote the Saints to impress or manipulate others, but to draw them to Christ; for if you truly believe what you are saying, then the entirety of the tradition already belongs to you!

Second, you must be true to the Message of the Cross. It is the ultimate unveiling of God's love for every aspect of His creation. The Lord ascends the Cross without condemnation of His crucifiers, and with forgiveness for their ignorance.

Can you also be loving to those who will not understand you? To those who misread you? To those, who because of their obstinacy, persevere in ignorance? Can you be forgiving, compassionate, merciful, and understanding?

If you will constantly and consistently make the effort to raise such a Cross of love and acceptance in your ministry, the people will come. For they will be drawn to the power of Christ's love, mirrored in your words, actions, and disposition.

So now, beloved Gabriel, put aside your anxieties and fears about this enormous step in your life. Trust in God, Who also believes in us!

Embrace the transformation of love that flows from the Exaltation of the Precious and Life-giving Cross. And may you be changed as the Psalmist says:

“Αὕτη ἡ ἀλλοίωσις τῆς δεξιᾶς τοῦ Ὑψίστου”

“This change has been wrought by the right hand of the Most High.”†

So now, enter into the Holy of Holies.

Present yourself to the Living God as an oblation of service and love.

And may the Lord who was Crucified and Arose from the dead, always keep you courageous and committed to raise the Holy Cross at all time and in every place, to the glory of His Holy Name.

Amen!

* John 12:32.

† Psalm 76:10, LXX.

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