

18/09/2023

His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America Clergy Family Dinner for the Metropolis of New Jersey



Your Eminence Metropolitan Apostolos, beloved brother in Christ,

Your Eminence, Metropolitan Kyrillos of Rhodes, Most Honored Representative of the Mother Church of Constantinople,

Your Eminences and Graces,

Very Reverend and Reverend Clergy, Presvyteres and Children,

I am so happy that we have this opportunity to be together, the evening before the Enthronement of His Eminence. I know that it is a tradition in America for there to be a family dinner the night before a wedding, and this seems somehow much like the same thing.

We gather as a family in Christ – the clergy and their families with their spiritual fathers – before we celebrate the Enthronement of your new Metropolitan.

As I look around this Community Center, and see the children of our priests and Presvyteres, my heart is filled with joy. Because you – the families of our clergy – represent what is best and brightest in our parish communities. For the Church is ultimately a family, sharing the same Divine Flesh of our Savior, and having His Precious Blood flowing in our spiritual veins.

Although Metropolitan Apostolos has been with your Metropolis for over two years now, and has served you all with distinction, he will now both lead and serve you with a distinct difference. He is now responsible for the spiritual life of this Metropolis. He is your leader, and yet, he remains your servant. This unique combination of roles is a model for every clergyman of the Metropolis to emulate and follow. Much like the Disciples who took up the challenge of our Lord Jesus Christ – to follow after Him – you, the clergy of the Metropolis, will have the opportunity to witness the example of Metropolitan Apostolos and follow his pattern.

For the Church of this Metropolis is like a continuously expanding circle, growing ever wider to encompass more and more people in the embrace of God's love. In the center of the circle is always the Head of the Church, our Lord Jesus Christ. And as the circle widens, filled with the Mother of God, the Angels and all the Saints, we also populate this Divine Circle – together with our families and friends, and all those who worship with us in the local communities. Like spokes to the hub of a wheel, each of us relates to the Divine Center, but we work best when we work together – just like a wheel.

Therefore, I invite all the clergy of the Metropolis to pull together to help the new Metropolitan in his servant-leadership of your parishes, and to find in him a spiritual father for you and your families. His concern is for your Presvyteres and children as well, for they are both his spiritual sisters, and his spiritual children.

That is why this Clergy Family Dinner tonight is so meaningful. Because it reminds us all of the nature of the Church, not as a mere organization, but as the family of God.

As the Church, the Body of Believers, we gather at the Holy Table to share the in the worship that reaches its pinnacle in the Divine Liturgy. It is the Most Holy Meal that nourishes our souls and bodies unto eternal life.

But we also need this – the nourishment that comes from being close to one another, where exchanges of loving friendship and encouragement take place around the common table. This is the essence of the “Agape Meal” of the earliest days of the Church, which we continue through such occasions as these.

I pray that as the days go forward, and the ministry of His Eminence Apostolos unfolds in the Metropolis, gatherings such as this will abound, and bring you all together in a spirit of mission of unconditional love for one another, and in service to the world.

We live in such a fragmented, even polarized, society. Christian love and compassion are needed now more than ever. And our Holy Greek Orthodox Faith has the answers for a world that is searching for the meaning of life.

May the Lord grant unto this God-protected Metropolis, that you grow in grace and love under the kind and gentle Archpastoral hand of your Metropolitan, and that your families may always be blessed with health and happiness. Amen.

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