

Invocation & Greeting By Archbishop Elpidophoros of America Honoring Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco Centennial Gala

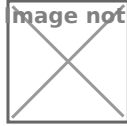


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Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

Almighty and Ever-living God, we give You special thanks on this day – OXI Day – for this gathering of love and appreciation of the Holy Metropolis of San Francisco. We ask Your special blessings upon its Shepherd, His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos, who is being recognized this evening by his faithful people, for the nineteen years of devoted and dedicated archpastoral ministry that he has undertaken throughout this shepherding of Your blessed and rational sheep. Grant him health, length of days, and every blessing of strength and grace to continue to rightly teach the word of Your Truth.

Bless also this gathering, the food and drink that nourish our bodies, and bless the hands of all those who have made these preparations for our necessities. Grant unto all who gather at this centennial celebration of gratitude, and to all their loved ones, that they may know the fullness of Your Divine Presence within their hearts, their minds, and their very souls. For unto You do we ascribe all honor, glory and worship, together with Your Eternal Father, and Your All-Holy, Good, and Life-creating Spirit: now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.

Amen.

My Beloved Brother in Christ, Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco,

Your Eminences and Graces

Dear Bishop John of Phocaea, Chancellor of the Metropolis,

Lieutenant Governor Kounalakis, our dear sister who has brought such pride to the Omogeneia and the country,

Honorable Consul General Socrates Sourvinos of Greece,

Our Master of Ceremonies, Robert Krantz, and

Co-Chairs of this Gala, George and Christine Psefteas,

Very Reverend and Reverend Fathers,

Esteemed Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate,

Honored Members of Leadership 100,

Dear Sisters of the Metropolis Philoptochos,

Distinguished Guests,

Beloved Friends in Christ,

I rejoice in being here with all of you this evening, especially on OXI Day, to celebrate nineteen years of the Archpastoral ministry of your Metropolitan and my beloved brother and co-celebrant in the Holy Spirit, His Eminence Gerasimos of San Francisco, a proud son of Kalamata. It is indeed fitting to recognize you, Your Eminence, on this Day of Remembrance in Greece.

The faithful clergy and laity of this God-protected Metropolis have chosen to bestow upon you, their beloved Spiritual Father, the 2023 Theofanis Economidis Award. This marvelous distinction is named for the incredible Archon Ekdikos Theofanis V. Economidis – an exceptional exemplar of what is best in our Orthodox Faith and Hellenic Tradition.

Our dear friend, Archon Exarchos George Marcus, summed up Archon Theofanis at the 2016 “Nicholas J. Bouras Award for Extraordinary Archon Stewardship” of the Order of Saint Andrew the Apostle – an award that George received just last week himself. He introduced Theofanis as a man who is:

“... a visionary and devoted steward of the Church and has exemplified extraordinary leadership. His lifelong humble service to the Orthodox Church is truly an inspiration to us all.”*

And these are the very same qualities that we celebrate tonight – exemplified by Archon Theofanis – and which we recognize and honor in Your Eminence’s person.

Vision. Devotion. Stewardship. Leadership. Humility. Service. Inspiration. Our recognition of His Eminence is an affirmation of these virtues, not only in his person, but we recognize their importance in the life of the Church. With them, Metropolitan Gerasimos has served this sacred flock for nearly one fifth of its history.

Metropolitan Gerasimos received the inheritance of the ever-memorable and late Metropolitan Anthony, and has magnified his legacy of a multi-faceted ministry to new heights. The spiritual infrastructure of the Metropolis of San Francisco has been built through their two arch-pastorates into a strong, vibrant, and energetic apostolate, for its people and the world.

If there is one aspect of Metropolitan Gerasimos that I believe sums up his praiseworthy character, it is “faithful duty.” This may not sound as dramatic or elegant as you might have expected, but please allow me to explain what I mean.

Your Metropolitan served our precious Theological School for several years in a number of capacities as a layman who was also graduate, and when he was Archdeacon to the ever-memorable Archbishop Iakovos. There was no task that he considered beneath his intelligence or station. He served a multitude of roles and always with a conscious commitment to the very best. I will not enumerate them, but in each role, he was truly the servant of the servants of God. And all of you gathered here tonight, know the truth of what I am saying. He has always carried out his duties faithfully, humbly and diligently. He has always put the Institution first; even gaining a higher degree – not to promote himself, but to be of even greater service.

When the Church called him to accept the episcopal mantle, he received it with humility and grace, and served expertly as Chief Secretary of the Holy Eparchial Synod. His election to be your Metropolitan was an exceedingly wise choice of His All-Holiness and the Holy and Sacred Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, as all of you can attest.

We assemble this evening not simply to praise His Eminence, but to be inspired by his example – an example of dutiful faithfulness to Christ and His Holy Church. Your Eminence, I know that in this glow of love and adoration by your faithful, you would rather quote the Lord Who said:

Ὅταν ποιήσητε πάντα τὰ διαταχθέντα ὑμῖν, λέγετε ὅτι δοῦλοι ἀχρεῖοί ἐσμεν, ὅτι ὁ ὠφείλομεν ποιῆσαι πεποιήκαμεν.

When you have done everything that is commanded to you, you must say, 'We are unprofitable servants, for we only did those things which we were duty-bound to do.'†

But I say to you, dear brother:

Your Eminence, you could not be further from ἀχρεῖος!

You are Ἄξιος and Ἀξιότατος!

Your service – not only here in the West, but throughout the Archdiocese, has been more than profitable – spiritually and in every way!

You have done much more than you were duty-bound to do, and you always did so with humility, patience, faithfulness and above all – love.

On behalf of everyone assembled here tonight, and the entirety of the Sacred Archdiocese of America, I say to you once again: Ἀξιότατος!

Many, many years of health, prosperity and joy in the Lord!

Ἐτη Πολλά!

* October 14, 2016.

† Luke 17:10.

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