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Archbishop Elpidophoros of America Remarks at the Archbishop's Welcome Reception Archdiocese Presbyters Council Clergy Retreat



Your Eminence(s) and Grace(s),

Beloved Fathers and Brothers in Christ,

I am so very pleased to be with you here at our National Clergy Retreat in the very pleasant city of Phoenix. I want to thank once again the brothers of the Archdiocese Presbyters Council, who have assiduously labored on behalf of all of us, to create a space and a program that will, no doubt, inspire us in our ministries and spiritual practice.

And I can be very certain of that, because our speaker during these days is an extraordinary Hierarch of our Holy Church, His Grace Bishop Maxim of the Los Angeles and Western American Diocese of the Serbian Orthodox Church. His biography speaks for itself. A scholar of vast knowledge and experience, His Grace speaks Greek as well as any of us, and he has deep knowledge of our Faith and Traditions. I know that we will all benefit in our hearts and minds by his

presentations. I thank you, Your Grace, for your prayerful and powerful presence with us.

The motto of the APC - "Brothers who love and serve one another" -has always impressed me. For as the Evangelist John reminds us:

Ὁ ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ φωτὶ μένει.

He who loves his brother, abides in the light.*

And that is why we have gathered as a national contingent of the clergy. To behold that light. To walk in that light. And to be that light.

Each of us comes here facing challenges back at home. Some of them more serious than others. Whether it is a difficult pastoral situation, or a family in crisis, I hope we all know that we have friends here. We have brothers here. And as the wise Solomon proclaimed:

A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity. †

We call this event a "retreat," but that could be interpreted as defeatist. We are not retreating from our challenges. Rather, what is really happening is a re-grouping - a re-integration with ourselves, and with one another.

As we pass this time together - in worship, in fellowship, in sharing meals and activities - let us pause and take in the light that surrounds us. Open your hearts to the Light of Christ that is within you and that same Light that is shining forth from your brothers in Christ. This is the True Light that illumines every person who comes into the world. ‡ This is the place where we can abide with God and He with us.

May the Lord of Glory, the Light of the World, grant unto us all His shining presence in these days of Communion and Community, as He did on the Holy Mountain of Tabor. And may we share that light with one another, strengthening and upholding each other in prayer, in our own presence, and in fellowship of our brotherhood.

For He is holy, together with His Eternal Father, and His All-Holy, Good, and Life-creating Spirit; now and forever, and unto the ages of ages.

Amen!

* I John 2:10.

† Proverbs 17:17.

‡ Cf. John 1:9.

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