

20/12/2023

Invocation & Greeting Archbishop Elpidophoros of America At the Cathedral School Christmas Program Archdiocesan Cathedral of the Holy Trinity



Beloved Children in the Lord,

Father Chrysostom, and the

Board Members, Friends and Supporters of our Cathedral School,

Let us begin with prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ our God, in order to save all people, You were born in a cave and laid in a manger.

You came to us on the darkest night of our shared history, and shone the light of love and compassion for all people of good will.

The Angels sang, the Shepherds marveled, and the Magi journeyed with a Star. Even the beasts of the field came to honor Your Birth from the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary.

We give thanks to you this day and every day for Your mercy and love, and especially for our life here at the Cathedral School. Bless us and all who live, serve and minister to this sacred School of our Cathedral, as we gather on this day to celebrate our Christmas Program; through the prayers of Your Holy Mother and all the Saints. Amen.

I am always pleased and delighted to spend time with you, the precious children of our Cathedral School, and your parents, families, and its teachers and administrators. Your Christmas program is very special to me, as all of you are.

I have the opportunity to visit many parishes and enjoy many such programs throughout the Christmas season, but here - in my own Cathedral and spiritual home - your presentation is always a most wonderful gift.

Our Cathedral School is not only historic, but it is a vital component of the life of the Cathedral. Gathering for this Christmas program is a highlight of the school year for the entire community. Your excitement is infectious, and I am always delighted by your presentation.

You are the stars of this show! Along with the Star of Bethlehem. In a way, you are like that magnificent heavenly appearance, because you guide us with your glowing and radiant faces. Remember what was said of that Star:

And behold, the star, that the Magi had seen in the East, led them forward, until it came and rested over where the Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.*

So this afternoon, my dear friends, our "little ones" are leading us forward with their shining smiles. They are each little stars sparkling with the light of Christ. They are so much more than earthly blessings. They are in league with the Host of Heaven, for as the Lord said:

... their Heavenly Angels constantly behold the face of their Father Who is in Heaven. †

They are a promise of the age to come, for each of us must enter the Kingdom of Heaven like a little child. ‡

Therefore, let us accept them as guiding stars for our lives, with abiding thankfulness for their presence in our Cathedral and in our families.

And let us praise the God of Heaven and Earth Who willed to become a little child for our sake, in the little town of Bethlehem, which was illumined by the Star!

Merry Christmas to all, and a Happy and Healthy New Year of 2024!

* Matthew 2:9-10.

† Matthew 18:10b.

‡ Cf. Matthew 18:3.

Photos: GOARCH/Dimitrios Panagos

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