

09/01/2024

Archbishop Elpidophoros Participates in Annual Epiphany Celebrations in Tarpon Springs



His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America traveled to Tarpon Springs, Florida this past weekend for the blessed Feast of the Epiphany. The annual celebration of Epiphany in Tarpon Springs is the largest outside of Greece. Thousands of faithful Orthodox Christians gathered to celebrate this holy feast and support the teenagers participating in the Cross Dive.

The weekend began with the Blessing of the Fleet at the Sponge Docks. [Read more here.](#)

On January 6, 2024, on the Feast of the Epiphany, the day began with Hierarchical Divine Liturgy at St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Cathedral in Tarpon Springs. His Eminence presided over the Divine Liturgy with His Eminence Archbishop Nikitas of Thyateira and Great Britain, His Grace Bishop Sevastianos of Zelon, His Grace Bishop Theophan of Philomelion, Dean of St. Nicholas Cathedral Rev. Fr. Athanasios Haros, and Fr. Theofanis Katsiklis of St. Nicholas Cathedral. Archbishop Elpidophoros awarded Kathy Theophilos with the medal of St. Paul. Kathy Theophilos and her husband, the late Speros Theophilos—archon and member of Leadership 100—were grand benefactors of the Church.

Also in attendance, Secretary General for Greeks Abroad and Public Diplomacy as a

representative of the Greek Government John Chrysoulakis, Consul General of Greece in Tampa Loukas Tsokos, Mayor of Tarpon Springs Costa Vatikiotis, and other community leaders.

His Eminence led the procession of parishioners to the Spring Bayou for the Cross Dive. The girls of St. Nicholas were dressed in elegant white dresses. Chloe Kotis, of Tarpon Springs, was responsible for the dove, representing the Holy Spirit, that was released into the air before the boys would dive for the cross.



Spectators waited along the water as the boys dove into the bayou and eagerly awaited on row boats for Archbishop Elpidophoros to throw the Cross into the water. Once His Eminence threw the Cross, the boys immediately jumped into the water and 16-year-old John Hittos quickly recovered the Cross and emerged from the water with cheers of joy. Hittos' loved ones embraced him and his peers triumphantly lifted him onto their shoulders as the crowd processed back to St. Nicholas Cathedral.



“It is through the Cross, and only through the Cross, that we arrive at the Resurrection and the everlasting joy of Life Eternal. Through sacrificial love; Through compassion and forgiveness,” said His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros, “In this ancient rite, we return the Cross to the depths, so that we might witness it once again come up on high.”

Read His Eminence’s Remarks after Divine Liturgy [here](#) and Remarks at the Theophany here.

For all photos from this weekend visit our Flickr [here](#).

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