



Photos by John Mindala

AXIOS! Archbishop Elpidophoros of America is Enthroned

**Archdiocesan Cathedral of the
Holy Trinity, New York**

**Excerpts from the Enthronement Address of His
Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America,
Complete address at goarch.org/enthronement**

Beloved brothers and sisters, my dear children in the Lord,

Today, I stand before all of you, humbled and grateful,
declaring with the Holy Prophet and Psalmist David:

Ἐτοίμη ἡ καρδιά μου ὁ Θεός. Ἐτοίμη ἡ καρδιά μου!

Ready is my heart is O God. Ready is my heart! (Psalm 57:7)

Indeed, my heart, soul, and mind are ready and eager to
embark on this great challenge and charge that our Thrice-
Holy God has granted to me by His grace, with my election,
at the recommendation of His All-Holiness Ecumenical
Patriarch Bartholomew, by the most reverend members of
the Holy and Sacred Synod, in order that I might serve you,
the beloved faithful of America, as your spiritual father and

pastor, the seventh Archbishop of the Holy Archdiocese of
America. The fact that this sacred commission took place
on May 11th—coinciding with the feast of Saints Cyril
and Methodios, peers of the apostles and illuminators of
the Slavs—reminds me of the principal conviction and
commitment of the First Throne of Constantinople to an
ecumenical worldview and mission. This sign further inspires
me to stir and sustain the grace that flows from God to the
Mother and Daughter Churches of Constantinople as well
as to our Archdiocese here in America—and to increase
this gift, in the words of the Gospel of John, “from grace to
grace” (John 1:16), through the intercessions of the All-Holy
Theotokos whose City, Constantinople, from 330 A.D. to
this day celebrates its foundation on May 11!

Therefore, I gratefully “remember among the first” (ἐν
πρώτοις) my Archbishop and Patriarch Bartholomew, who
bears the foremost burden and first responsibility of unity in
the Church. It is he who instructed me in his “daily concern
for the welfare of all the churches of God” (2 Corinthians
11:28). It is he who entrusted and encouraged me from the
earliest moments of my ministry. It is he who prepared and
predisposed me to serve the people of God.

As a young deacon in the Patriarchal Court, the Ecumenical
Patriarch encouraged me to sharpen every skill for the
ministry of the Church. As a priest, he entrusted me with
the administration of the Chief Secretariat of the Holy and

Sacred Synod. And as Metropolitan of Bursa and Abbot of the Holy Trinity Monastery at Halki, he commended to my care the welfare of an ancient See and the well-being of our precious Theological School and Monastery, which remains unjustly closed since 1971. For 150 years, that historical and trailblazing school educated and trained the clergy of the Great Church of Christ—the Sacred See of Constantinople—where Ecumenical Councils convened, where doctrinal definitions were articulated, where liturgical traditions were shaped, where saints and confessors were recognized, and where the All-Holy Mother of God was especially honored.

Moreover, I recognize those who have preceded me in this glorious and blessed archdiocese, all those who have shaped and defined this exceptional church. These include first His Eminence Demetrios, who has honored me with his presence today in order to transmit to me the church that he so faithfully and attentively ministered for two decades. But also Archbishop Iakovos, who boldly walked beside Martin Luther King Junior against the cultural tide of the time and even against the advice of his peers. And above all, the inspired pioneer Athenagoras, who recognized the importance of breaking down barriers with

other church confessions and faith communities. My aspiration is to plant and multiply their diverse gifts in the fertile soil of this church and land as I reach out in a dialogue of love and truth to our ecumenical and interfaith brothers and sisters. My heart is certainly ready and steadfast to follow their groundbreaking lead and their illustrious example.

As Orthodox Christians, of course—to adopt the words of the Nicaean-Constantinopolitan Creed, our symbol of faith—we are truly “catholic and apostolic” only when we remember and realize that we are also “one and holy.” And so my heart is ready and steadfast in the sensitive and critical matter of Orthodox unity. I sincerely pledge to devote myself—with all my heart, soul and mind—to the reaffirmation and reinvigoration of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in order that we may

collaborate with greater unity, while witnessing with greater conviction and credibility to the broader American society. Our teaching is one in the sacraments and one in the life of the church; therefore, our preaching should also reflect the same unanimity and consensus in the culturally diverse and pluralistic world that we inhabit and share. In this way, we shall be ready and steadfast at all times “to preach good news to the poor . . . to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight

to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to declare the acceptable year of the Lord. (Luke 4:18–19) And we shall “always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls us to account for the hope that lies in us, and to do so with gentleness and reverence.” (1 Peter 3:15)

Furthermore, I acknowledge and greet with all my heart on this occasion those representing the highest political offices of this nation and civil authorities of this city, as well as the distinguished leaders and members of the ecumenical and academic communities. You are a powerful reminder that none of us can respond to or resolve the challenges before us without the solidarity and support of everyone without exception, without exclusion, and without discrimination. I thank each and every one of you for this important confirmation and imperative affirmation.

Dear and distinguished friends,
My heart is especially ready and steadfast to serve this Archdiocese and nation, both of which I have long admired since childhood and from my ministry at the Phanar. Through the decades, I have observed the development of the Church here, the challenges it has encountered, and the ground it has broken. So, I am here—your new Archbishop—to listen to



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you, to dialogue with you, and to work with you. My prayerful aspiration is to stand before you and beside you, to lead by example and exhortation, and to minister through service and sacrifice. Let us advance together as the Body of Christ and body of believers, as a united Archdiocese and Church, and as a cherished Eparchy of our venerable Ecumenical Patriarchate.

So, I am here—your new Archbishop—to listen to you, to dialogue with you, and to work with you. My prayerful aspiration is to stand before you and beside you, to lead by example and exhortation, and to minister through service and sacrifice.



I can think of no higher calling and no finer vocation for my life than to be with you in your joys and your sorrows, your triumphs and your trials. My heart is ready and steadfast—willing and prepared—to serve you at all times and in all tasks. Of the many areas that I hope to address with a sense of pastoral urgency, I would highlight the loving ministry to our beloved youth, the reinforcement of our theological education, as well as the completion of the shrine at Ground Zero. In all these areas, we implore—above and beyond all others and all else—the strength and support of God’s grace. For “unless the Lord builds our house, those who labor do so in vain.” (Psalm 128:1)

First, if we are to be true to our evangelical roots and

spiritual traditions, we must be a Church that embraces our young people, that embraces the strangers in our midst, that embraces all members of our community and our country. Our young people face an ever-growing deluge of information and access to knowledge that is unprecedented. The Church—which means all of us—must be ready to meet our youth where they live and where they learn: in our communities, on college campuses, with all of the range and resources of social media at our disposal. We cannot lose any time, and we cannot wait for them to reach out to us. We must offer them a taste of the sacramental life, of the living Body of Christ. We should welcome and embrace them, meeting them—just as the Lord Jesus Himself did with His disciples—on their own terms, in their own hearts, and with their own resources.

Second, our ministry to our youth and our message to our world must be grounded in the development and expansion of our Theological School, the heart of education of clergy and formation of leaders for our Archdiocese but also beyond. I will never forget the extraordinary semester I spent teaching at Holy Cross School of Theology in the spring of



2004. You see, my dear brothers and sisters: the challenges of church management are not merely secular, mundane concerns for the Church. They touch on the very heart of our response to celebrating and communicating the gifts that we have received from God. In a very real sense, we are all deacons! We are all accountable stewards of the resources of the faithful. And if we face our challenges and hurdles humbly and collectively, then I have every confidence that we shall overcome them. If the Lord is our strength and our salvation—our consolation and our illumination—then our brightest days are surely ahead of us. Third, as I stand on this throne—beholding all of you in this splendid cathedral and addressing so many more of you by means of modern communications—I also behold the sacred image and relics of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker. Precisely because we believe in miracles; precisely because St. Nicholas

works wonders; and precisely because the name Nicholas means “victory of the people,” we are able to echo the words of the Letter to the Romans, which proclaims: “We are able to overcome every challenge through the God who loved us.” (Romans 8:37)

It is this victory and miracle that the Saint Nicholas National Shrine at the World Trade Center represents and symbolizes—not only for our Archdiocese, but for the City of New York, and in fact for the entire American nation. On that bitter day of September 11, 2001, so many lives were lost, so much suffering was caused, and our little Saint Nicholas Church was obliterated in the collapse of the Twin Towers. Yet hatred was ultimately overcome by hope, violence was overcome by forgiveness, and despair was overcome by mercy, compassion, and love.

It is our duty and our responsibility as Orthodox Christians—but also our obligation and commitment to God and His people—to complete and open the doors of the Saint Nicholas National Shrine as a witness and vision of what is best and what is beautiful in all people of faith and religious conviction. I assure you that my heart is ready and steadfast in this task as well.

Dear friends, sisters and brothers,

Today, we celebrate the “leave-taking” (or ἀπόδοσις) of the Feast of Pentecost, when the Orthodox Church invites “all those who are baptized and clothed in Christ” to become children led by and enlightened by the fire and force of the Holy Spirit, who calls all people to unity by shedding their divisions and doubts. As we chant in the kontakion of the day: “Let us together glorify the All-Holy Spirit.” And as we declare in the communion hymn of the day: “This spirit of goodness shall guide us on the right way and lead us on level ground.” (Psalm 144:10)

Tomorrow, I shall look forward with great anticipation and expectation to celebrating and sharing with all of you the Eucharistic meal on the Feast of All Saints. We shall have the opportunity to remember all the saints—very ancient saints like St. Nicholas the Wonderworker, and very recent saints like St. Iakovos Tsalikis. At the same time, however, we shall remember that we are all called to become members of the communion of saints—fellow travelers on the magnificent journey that God has so graciously and generously prepared for us in this blessed archdiocese, church and land.

Let our hearts, therefore, remain ready and steadfast. Amen!



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