



Remarks for Dinner with the Ecumenical Patriarch

Monday, November 1, 2021

“Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord.”

(Psalm 117:26)

Your All-Holiness, Bartholomew, beloved and esteemed Archbishop of Constantinople, New Rome, and Ecumenical Patriarch:

On behalf of your brother and concelebrant, His Beatitude, John the Tenth of Antioch, and my brother hierarchs of this holy Archdiocese, along with our reverend clergy, esteemed archdiocesan trustees, and pious laypeople, I joyfully welcome Your All-Holiness and all your delegation into our midst. We also congratulate Your All-Holiness on reaching thirty years of arch-pastoral ministry on the Ecumenical Throne. We in the United States rejoice at this visit, which fills us with love, peace, and grace.

We particularly rejoice in the opportunity to break bread together and affirm the long-standing and richly fruitful bond between the apostolic sees of Constantinople and Antioch. Long ago, this bond was vividly personified in Saint John Chrysostom, who journeyed from Antioch to receive the omophorion of the imperial capital, taking with him the rhetorical skill and pastoral experience he had gained in his homeland on the Orontes. Fourteen centuries later, this bond was also seen in Saint Raphael of Brooklyn, who like so many Antiochian clergymen over the years, left Syria to study at the Holy Theological School of Halki, before God called him to his apostolic mission in America.

In this spirit of brotherhood, we have been working together with our friend Archbishop Elpidophoros in the Assembly of Bishops and through many collaborations between our archdioceses. As this dinner providentially falls on the eve of His Eminence's name's day, we especially want to wish him much joy and long life in fruitful ministry, through the prayers of the Holy Martyr Elpidophoros.

The brotherly bond we all share is essential to the life of Christ's holy Church. More than mere practical cooperation, it is the spiritual openness and connectedness that allow Christ's grace to flow between us and through us, to bring light, nourishment, and refreshment to the world. Saint Cyprian of Carthage beautifully describes the necessity of such unity, writing:

There are many rays of the sun, but one light. There are many branches of a tree, but one strength from its mighty root. From one spring flow many streams, and though they are multiplied in rich abundance, yet they are still united in one source. You cannot separate a ray of light from the sun, because its unity does not allow division. You **can** break a branch from a tree, but when broken, it will not be able to bud. Cut a stream off from its source and it dries up. It is the same with the Church. ¹

¹ Cyprian of Carthage, *On the Unity of the Church*

We must never tire of seeking this indispensable unity, through love, mutual respect, and collaboration, under the headship of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Your All-Holiness, our table fellowship today is an image of the unity we seek. Please pray for us and all the Orthodox faithful in America, that God will build up the Church here in true holiness and fraternal love. And we ourselves pray that He will uphold and preserve Your All-Holiness for many years! Εἰς πολλὰ ἔτη, Δέσποτα!
