

**Address to Archbishop Elpidophoros for His Visit at St. George
Cathedral, Philadelphia, PA 8/8/2021**

Your Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America, Exarch of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople in America, and Patriarchal Vicar of the Sacred Metropolis of New Jersey, may the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Love of our God the Father and the Communion of the Holy Spirit be always with you!

It is with tremendous joy that we welcome You today to our historic and legendary St. George Cathedral in Philadelphia in your first pastoral visit to our faithful community. Your presence and participation today in your first Divine Liturgy at St. George, is considered a great honor and causation of happiness for us, thus, we thank you from the bottom of our hearts, especially during these days where the pandemic still exists, when we all feel distressed and anxious, not only because of the effect of the disease to our physical innermost, but mostly of the various effects that this ailment brings to our own spiritual lives.

Nowadays, it is rare to come across an Orthodox Christian who has never heard of St. George the Trophybearer, the patron saint of our Cathedral. People from all over America come and visit the Cathedral to offer their prayers and make requests to this blessed saint. All those who come to venerate his relics with their healing power, are asking him to intercede for us before Our Savior, and help us to overcome this devastating pandemic. This epidemic was and continue to be a difficult time for everyone. But, there is always a time for everything, and the merciful Lord is in control of everything. Let us hope in the healing presence of Jesus and praying for one another. Let us trust in the Lord always.

From my early young adult years as a student of the Theological School of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in Greece, and as a fellow class mate, I became acquainted with your presence, and became well aware of the gifts and talents with which the All- Loving and Omnipotent God endowed and bestowed upon you. In addition, and throughout the years, you received from the mother Church, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, the beacon, the light and the hope of all the

Orthodox Churches in the world, your elegant and noble training as a deacon, a priest and an Archimandrite, a Chief secretary of the Sacred and Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and later as Metropolitan of Bursa before your election to the throne of the Holy Archdiocese of America. Throughout this process, you have assimilated all the ecclesiastical experience of Your fellow co-workers and great hierarchs of the Ecumenical Throne of Constantinople, and that is why one contemplates and experiences on You the graces of prudence and unification, diligence and composure, austerity and sweetness, reasoning and grace. All these things make you a strong and at the same time a compassionate and charismatic leader who abides in the law of God but at the same time is seeking His merciful and righteous spirit.

We are particularly enthusiastic here at the Cathedral, that by the Grace of the Holy Spirit you had been promoted to the rank of the Archbishop of America, and we praise God for that. Since your election and enthronement, Your contribution to the empowerment and upliftment of our Greek Orthodox Church and

homogeneity in the United States is substantial and significant. With your presence you hydrate its existence and offer to it an admirable religious, national and educational service. It is my sincere prayer that you as Archbishop of America will serve this Holy Archdiocese as a fiery example and reminder to your faithful flock that ministering the Lord and His Church, is one of the most precious gifts that we may offer in return as a means of thanksgiving to our Creator for the blessings He bestows continually upon us.

Unfortunately, due to the pandemic and in the midst of the Summer, not all of our faithful were able to come and be with us today. Therefore, I extend to You everyone's respect and humble wishes for a blessed, healthy and productive ministry as our Spiritual Father and leader, and the Spiritual Father and leader of many Orthodox faithful across the United States of America.

St. George Cathedral celebrates in the year 2022 100 years since its inception as a Greek Orthodox parish of our Holy Archdiocese, and 200 years since the end and conclusion of the construction of the church building, and has been and always will

be a dedicated Parish to our Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, to the Holy Archdiocese, to our Archbishop, and to the mission of our Orthodox faith in the city of Philadelphia and around the world.

Your presence and visit today, Your Eminence, renews our mission and hard work, as you are giving us strength, power, and courage, not only to continue, but also to become even stronger, especially after this post-pandemic time.

Please accept on behalf of the Parish Council and the faithful of this community our gratitude again for being with us in the midst of the Dormition of the Theotokos Lenten season, which is a time of reflection, repentance and prayer, and wish you that the Lord our God keep You safe, honorable, and healthy for many years!