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Archbishop Elpidophoros Ordination Address to Deacon Anastasios Halas



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His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America

Ordination Address to Deacon Anastasios Halas

December 4, 2024

Saint Barbara Greek Orthodox Church

Orange, Connecticut

Beloved Deacon Anastasios:

Today, on this feast of the Great Martyr Saint Barbara, you appear before the Holy Altar of the Church named for this powerful Heavenly Patroness, in order to rise in the ranks of the Holy Priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Your family – your wife Sofia and children, Effie and George, are here, together with other members of your clan and friends from the neighboring Bridgeport Parish of the Holy Trinity where you were raised and where you have served.

Many clergy have gathered, in order to welcome you into the fellowship of the Order of Melchizedek.

But it is the Great-Martyr herself, who beckons you to a life in the ministry of self-sacrifice, of patience to wait upon the Lord of Hosts, and of love for the People of God.

It is Saint Barbara whom we honor with hymns and praises today, and who leads off these next three days – December 4th, 5th, and 6th, that are a profound image of the life and experience of the Church.

Today a martyr, tomorrow an ascetic, and the next day a miracle-working Hierarch. Each of these Saints offers to you wisdom and an example of how to serve the Church.

The drama of martyrdom is sometimes hard to imagine for ourselves, yet the love that inspires this ultimate sacrifice is available in every human heart. The asceticism championed by such Desert Fathers as Saint Savas the Sanctified appear to be well beyond our abilities, but even the smallest renunciation can have great impact on our life. And finally, the heroic and noble ministry of Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker seems far beyond our capacities, yet, as Saint Paul enjoins us, we are always to reach out toward what God has set before us, trusting in His providential mercy.¹

Beloved Deacon: you are very blessed indeed to ascend into the fraternity of the Presbyters during these Holy Days!

For as a priest of the Most High God, you are called to minister to the Faithful offer the bread that is spoken of in the Didache, the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles:

Even as this broken bread was scattered over the hills, and was gathered together and became one, so let Your Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into Your kingdom; for Yours is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ forever.²

This ancient prayer expresses a sublime truth about your mission as a Presbyter. You are to be a gatherer, one who brings people together. You are called to gather together that which has been separated.

For what is separated by harsh language, can be joined by gentle speech.

And what is separated by wrongdoing, can be brought together by forgiveness.

What is separated by suffering, can be healed by compassion.

And what is separated by animosity, can be bridged by love.

Beloved Deacon Anastasios: You are called to be a gatherer, a priest who brings into unity those things which before had been apart. For our God is the "One Who gives life to the dead, and calls things that are not, as though they are!"³

Your ministry is expanded this day, by taking on the awesome responsibility of the celebration of the Holy and Divine Liturgy. For it is through the remembrance of our

Lord Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, as Saint Paul says, that “those who were once far away become close by the Blood of Christ.”⁴ Thus, you will stand before the Holy Altar, and bring your every intention to the work of reconciliation – first of the human family with God, and of the human family with one another. For neither can be truly accomplished, unless both are.

As your priestly life evolves, allow the consciousness of rapprochement and conciliation – a consciousness that we have all witnessed in the extraordinary example of His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew – allow it and encourage it to grow and embrace all that you think, do, and say. And you will see that when we gather up our fragmented world, we will always have more than we could have ever imagined.⁵

Therefore, Beloved Deacon:

Ascend now into the Holy Altar, as if it were the hills where the grain grows and is gathered into the one true loaf of Divine Bread. And through the intercessions of Saint Barbara, Saint Savas, and Saint Nicholas, join your fathers and brothers in the high priestly ministry of reconciliation and peace, which is in the Order of Melchizedek, led by our Lord Jesus Christ, our Great High Priest – to Whom is due all glory, honor and worship; together with His Eternal Father and the Co-Eternal and Life-giving Spirit; now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.

Amen.

1 Cf. Philippians 3:13.

2 The Didache, chapter 9.

3 Romans 4:17.

4 Ephesians 2:13.

5 Cf. Matthew 14:20.

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