

**FEAST DAY OF ST. BARTHOLOMEW**

**A Concert Honoring the Name Day of**

**ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW**

**In support of the missionary work of the Holy Metropolis of New Zealand**

**Remarks**

**Dr. Anthony J. Limberakis  
Archon Grand Aktouarios, National Commander  
Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate**

**June 10, 2026  
Church of the Holy Resurrection Greek Orthodox Church  
Brookville, NY**

**Your Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America, Exarch of the  
Ecumenical Patriarchate,**

**You Eminence Metropolitan Myron of New Zealand**

**Your Graces, Father Panteleimon, Proistamenos, Reverend Fathers, Regional  
Commander Camarinos, Brother Archons, Friends All, and FOUNDERS of  
the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew Foundation. The Archons of the  
Ecumenical Patriarchate created the Bartholomew Foundation to ensure the  
economic security of the Holy Mother Church in *perpetuity* and it is my hope  
that this magnificent Church of the Resurrection would consider becoming a  
FOUNDER parish, joining 17 other Greek Orthodox churches in the  
Archdioces.**

**On this sacred evening, as we gather prayerfully at Vespers on the eve of the  
Feast of the Holy Apostle Bartholomew, we also prepare to honor the Name  
Day of His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew — the spiritual  
leader of the world's Orthodox Christians and 269<sup>th</sup> direct successor to the  
First Called Apostle of Jesus Christ, St. Andrew.**

**It is therefore especially fitting tonight, in the presence of our Spiritual Father in America, Archbishop Elpidophoros and His Eminence Metropolitan Myron of New Zealand, to reflect upon a phrase that has drawn considerable attention in recent years, when His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros described the Ecumenical Patriarch as “First without Equal,” in relation to the ancient Orthodox understanding of *primus inter pares* — “first among equals.”**

**At first hearing, some may wonder whether these two expressions contradict one another. In truth, they reveal the delicate and profound balance at the heart of Orthodox ecclesiology.**

**Every Orthodox bishop — whether the Ecumenical Patriarch himself or the most junior bishop newly ordained — possesses the fullness of the apostolic ministry. Every bishop celebrates the same Divine Liturgy, proclaims the same Gospel, and safeguards the same apostolic faith. No bishop possesses a greater sacramental grace than another. In this sacred sense, the Ecumenical Patriarch is indeed *first among equals* — first within a brotherhood of bishops who are equal in apostolic dignity and sacramental life.**

**Yet from the very beginning of the Church, equality has never meant the absence of order. The Apostles themselves acted synodically, but there was always a *protos* — a first — who served unity and coordination within the life of the Church.**

**So too today. The Ecumenical Patriarch is not an Orthodox pope standing above the Church. Rather, he serves within the Church as the visible center of Orthodox unity and conciliarity. His primacy is one of service, responsibility, and sacrifice.**

**Thus, when Archbishop Elpidophoros spoke of the Patriarch as “First without Equal,” he referred not to superiority of personhood or sacramental grace, but to the uniqueness of the ministry entrusted to the Ecumenical Throne. There is only one Archbishop of Constantinople-New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch. Only one occupies the Throne historically endowed by the Ecumenical Councils with particular prerogatives and responsibilities for the life of world Orthodoxy.**

**Among those responsibilities is the granting of autocephaly — as witnessed in the recognition of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine. Whatever opinions may surround that historic act, no other hierarch in Orthodoxy possessed the canonical authority or historical responsibility to issue the Tomos of Autocephaly in that manner. That responsibility belonged uniquely to the Ecumenical Patriarchate.**

**And yet, in the beautiful paradox of Orthodoxy, the same Patriarch who bears these unique responsibilities remains equal in episcopal grace to the youngest bishop ordained yesterday. This is the genius of the Orthodox Church: primacy without domination, authority without triumphalism, and leadership inseparable from humility and service.**

**Perhaps this is especially meaningful tonight, as we honor the Name Day of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. The Apostle Bartholomew was counted among the Twelve — equal in apostolic calling with the other Apostles — and yet each Apostle bore a distinct mission for the building up of the Church. So too the Ecumenical Patriarch bears a unique apostolic responsibility in our own age: to preserve unity, uphold canonical order, and serve as a voice of Orthodoxy before the world.**

**Therefore, “first among equals” and “first without equal” are not opposing ideas. They are complementary truths. One safeguards the equality of all bishops in apostolic grace; the other expresses the singular ministry entrusted**

**to the Ecumenical Patriarch for the unity and good order of the Orthodox Church throughout the world.**

**As we celebrate this blessed feast and offer our prayers for His All-Holiness on the occasion of his Name Day, may God grant him many years — strengthened in wisdom, humility, courage, and health — to continue his apostolic ministry in service to Christ and His Holy Church.**

**Ἄξιος! Ἄξιος! Ἄξιος!**

**EIS POLLA ETI, DESPOTA.**