

ADDRESS

BY THE NATIONAL COMMANDER OF THE ARCHONS

ANTHONY J. LIMBERAKIS, MD

Archon Aktouarios

Archon Tribute Dinner

Marmara Hotel, Istanbul - April 7, 2011

Your All-Holiness,

Most Reverend Members of the Holy and Sacred Synod,

Venerable Hierarchs and Clergy,

**Distinguished Archons and Members of the Omogeneia in this great
City,**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As all of us know very well, this year marks a significant milestone for the Ecumenical Patriarchate and for our Church inasmuch as we are celebrating the 20th blessed anniversary of the Patriarchal tenure and pastoral ministry of His All-Holiness, our spiritual Father and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew.

This watershed anniversary is significant not only because of the innumerable and impressive achievements of our spiritual leader, but even in and of itself. Because over the last seventeen centuries, only nine Patriarchs completed twenty years of continuous ministry on the Throne of Constantinople-New Rome. Indeed, from the 20th century, only Patriarch Athenagoras; and from this century, only Ecumenical

Patriarch Bartholomew served 20 years. I would humbly claim that it is a unique blessing that both of these visionary leaders were so closely associated with the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.

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The reality is that, what he has achieved in the last two decades is as far reaching and multifaceted, as it is breathtaking.

From an ecclesiastical standpoint, he has pioneered unthinkable initiatives such as the extraordinary sessions of the Synaxis of the Heads of all Autocephalous Churches, the biennial Synaxis of the Hierarchs of the Great Church of Christ, the International Clergy-Laity Congresses and Youth Conferences. And so much more ...

From a global perspective, the Tolerance and Peace Conferences in Istanbul, the international conferences in various parts of Europe and the world after 9/11, seeking greater interfaith understanding and acceptance, as well as the inter-religious dialogues with Jews and Muslims, with visits to numerous nations of the Middle East. And so much more ...

From an ecumenical viewpoint, the continuation and strengthening of bonds with other confessions, such as the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Communion, the Lutheran World Federation, the World Methodist Council. And, above all, with the pre-Chalcedonian Churches, with official visits to Ethiopia and other nations. How can we ever forget the return of the relics of Saints Gregory the Theologian and John Chrysostom from the late Pope John Paul II? And so much more ...

From an Inter-Orthodox outlook, the tireless efforts to promote Pan-Orthodox cooperation, despite seemingly insurmountable tensions and conflicts, with countless journeys to all the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches, and especially with his reactivation – after so many years of deadlock – of the Pan-Orthodox Consultations, Preparatory Commissions and Episcopal Assemblies throughout the world, leading up to the Great Council, for which we pray that God will continue to grant him the strength to realize. And so much more ...

From a political, ecological and social vantage point, the exceptional respect that he has earned – on behalf of all of us as Orthodox faithful and defenders of the Ecumenical Patriarchate – through prestigious awards, such as the United States Congressional Gold Medal (for which he received the most votes in its history!), the unique and trail-blazing Ecological Symposia on major waterways of the planet (for which he earned the title “Green Patriarch”), and – what was unimaginable only a few brief years ago! – the return of the title of the Prinkipos Orphanage on the Patronal Feastday of St. Andrew, which will be the venue of his ongoing environmental inspiration. And so much more ...

And all of this has taken place under the most difficult political, social and financial conditions, which resemble the age of martyrdom in the early Church. This *diakonia* through *martyria* is especially highlighted these days, when – on April 10th – we commemorate Ecumenical Patriarch Gregory V, who stands as a powerful reminder of the circumstances within which our own spiritual leader must serve and function.

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Nevertheless, a visionary leader is more than simply the sum of the achievements that he has managed to accumulate over the years. Vision is by definition forward-looking. And we are grateful to God that we are blessed with a spiritual father, who will undoubtedly shower and surprise us with even more gifts and successes in the future.

Therefore, Your All-Holiness, while we sincerely congratulate you and respectfully venerate your hand for all that you have accomplished over the last 20 years, above all we wholeheartedly pray and hope for your continued health and ministry for many, many more years.

Eis polla eti, Despota!

Axios! Axios! Axios!