

**Exhortation at the Episcopal Ordination of Bishop Gerasim
St. Seraphim Cathedral, Dallas, TX
June 29, 2021**

By the grace of God, we have assembled in a sacred gathering in the Name of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ, in order to participate in this joyous and grace-filled event, the ordination to the Holy Episcopacy of Bishop Gerasim of Fort Worth, Auxiliary to His Eminence Archbishop Alexander and the Diocese of the South. We are blessed to have as co-consecrators my brother bishops, especially:

- His Eminence Metropolitan Isaiah, Bishop of Nikozi and Tskhinvali, of the Georgian Orthodox Church. We are grateful to God for your presence today, Your Eminence, because it reminds us of the catholicity of our Church, and the warm fellowship that exists between the Georgian Orthodox Church and the Orthodox Church in America. On behalf of the Holy Synod and the entire Orthodox Church in America, we ask you to convey our greetings to His Holiness Patriarch Ilia, and assure him of our prayers for him and our right hand of fellowship.
- His Grace Bishop James, Bishop of Sonora, the Second Vicar of the Western American Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia. I understand that you are longtime friends with His Grace Bishop Gerasim and that you traveled along the same road to Orthodoxy with him. We welcome you and ask you to convey our greetings to both His Eminence Archbishop Kyrill and His Eminence Metropolitan Hilarion, and assure them of our prayers and our fellowship.

I am also grateful to my brothers here with us from Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America:

- His Eminence Archbishop Benjamin, Archbishop of San Francisco and the West;
- His Eminence Archbishop Melchisedek, Archbishop of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania;
- His Eminence Archbishop Alexander, Archbishop of Dallas, the South and the Bulgarian Diocese, in whose diocese and cathedral we are celebrating these sacred mysteries;
- His Eminence Archbishop Paul, Archbishop of Chicago and the Midwest.

And also the following auxiliary bishops of the Orthodox Church in America:

- His Grace Bishop Daniel, Bishop of Santa Rosa, Auxiliary to the Diocese of San Francisco and the West;
- His Grace Bishop Andrei, Bishop of Cleveland, Auxiliary to the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America.

We have with us many priests and deacons, including a newly ordained priest and deacon, as well as official and distinguished guests—all of whom we will welcome and honor in due time.

Your Grace Bishop Gerasim, newly ordained Bishop of Fort Worth, I want to turn my attention one more time to you, and offer you the following exhortation. His Eminence Archbishop Alexander will offer words to you tomorrow when you celebrate your Liturgy at St. Barbara's in Fort Worth. No doubt he will speak to you about your ministry within the Diocese of the South. As primate of the Orthodox Church in America, however, I want to congratulate you, offer you a few words, and speak of your role within the episcopate in our Church.

On behalf of all the bishops, clergy, monastics, and faithful of the Orthodox Church

in America, and on behalf of all those who have gathered here today to give expression to the fullness of the Church: I wholeheartedly congratulate you on your ordination as auxiliary bishop to Archbishop Alexander and the Diocese of the South. With the words of your ordination still ringing in our ears, I offer once again the acclamation: "Ἀξιολογῶ!"

Through the mystery of the All-Holy Spirit and the laying on of hands of the bishops here present, as well as the open Gospel book placed on your head, our Lord has poured forth upon you the heavenly grace sufficient for you to complete your episcopal and apostolic labors.

To the faithful entrusted to you, be merciful, as our Heavenly Father is merciful. Offer them consolation, kindness, and love. Be an apt teacher, guiding all to the true faith. Where you find faith lacking, renew it by bestowing upon them sound teaching, so that they might acquire knowledge of heavenly things.

As to the presbyters and deacons of this diocese, together with His Eminence, seek ways to support and guide them. Lead them to "whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise"; remind them to "think about these things" (Phil 4:8).

With regard to your brother bishops, Your Grace, I urge you to be of one mind with His Eminence Archbishop Alexander, with the Holy Synod, with the entire Episcopacy of the Orthodox Church in America, and with me. As the canons of the Church remind us, when we, the bishops, are in harmony with each other, "God

will be glorified through the Lord, in the Holy Spirit; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”

Finally, my dear brother, I urge you to take care of yourself. Be mindful of your health. Find time to renew yourself through prayer, fasting, charity, and spiritual reading, and also by taking some time to rest and reflect.

With this exhortation, I bless you to:

[Here follows the prayer of the bestowing of the Pastoral Staff]

Receive this Pastoral Staff that you may lead the flock of Christ entrusted to your care. May the Lord Himself be your strength and support in your exercise of the archpastoral ministry in this God-protected diocese. We ask you now to ascend the Episcopal Cathedra and give your blessing to those who have taken part in this celebration and to all Christ’s flock.