



**Master Iconographer Elias Damianakis
Archon Maestor of the Great Church of Christ
offers a series of lectures at local Greek Festival**



St George Greek Orthodox Church in New Port Richey, Florida held its 32nd annual Greek-American Festival, Nov. 4 to 6. It has become the Tampa Bay Areas largest and most popular festival attracting thousands of visitors; enjoying dozens of carnival rides, live entertainment from Greece, Greek food & delicacies prepared by dozens of volunteers, hosting international vendors, Greek Dance groups, pony rides, and Church Tours.

This year the Church Tours included Archon Elias Damianakis, the internationally renowned iconographer who offered lectures on iconography, church history and the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Archon Elias recalls the interest in the Ecumenical Patriarchate. “When I presented the importance of the Ecumenical Patriarchates influence on Christian Art throughout the centuries people, were genuinely surprised.”

“The Ecumenical Patriarchate was and is -by far- the greatest patron of our common ‘Christian’ artistic inheritance”. Of course, Archon Elias elaborated on the many important aspects of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which have simply been overlooked due to the millennium of time and ecclesial oppression or as he puts it “a revisionist or ignorance of history”. He received a loud applause when he posed some simple questions to the hundreds of visitors throughout the weekend.

Upon asking those gathered to examine the Icon of Jesus Christ Pantocratora he asked “anything unusual?” those gathered said no. He then asked “Why is Jesus holding a book?” Silence. “We know historically speaking, in the time of Jesus, the book did not



exist...” It was the Orthodox Church, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople during the earliest centuries of Christianity which promoted their design, development and usage”. Probably so bishops could easily argue the theological and doctrinal issues which were being discussed. Scrolls are cumbersome and difficult to use... In addition he explained the meaning of colors in Iconography and the various artistic techniques developed and popularized in Constantinople, including: egg tempera, mosaics, enamel cloisonné, gilding, architecture, music, and so on.

He made presentations about the current state-of-affairs the Eastern Patriarchs exist under, with an obvious emphasis on the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople and the lack of Religious Freedom in Turkey. One session focused on His All Holiness’ 25th Anniversary as Ecumenical Patriarch and its historical significance.

During the Iconography Painting Classes/Lectures, Archon Elias painted an Icon of St Andrew the First called Apostle which he would constantly tie-in-to the Great Church of Christ and Patriarchate of Constantinople. From sketch to near completion during what some have called a 36 hour “Marathon of Icon-Painting” ... Archon Elias calls it his ‘ministry’. He had live streams online, which he is “very popular” per tour organizers “he reaches over 100,000 people on various social media outlets like Facebook, Twitter, and Youtube. Not to mention several popular websites you can find on his internet hub/blog archonelias.com ”

In addition to accepting iconography commissions from individuals and parishes [orthodoxiconography.com] Archon Elias Damianakis offers lectures, iconography painting seminars, and curates icon

exhibitions around the world. In 2013 Archon Elias curated the first Permanent Exhibition of Contemporary Iconography (19th -21st Centuries) an international collection now housed at Hellenic College / Holy Cross School of Theology in Boston. This prototype collection is now being imitated in Greece and Russia.

Most recently Archon Elias has underwritten several websites which illustrate his other passions in life. Most popular is OIKOU.org a site dedicated to Orthodoxy & the Environment. Inspired by the teachings of His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, OIKOU.org seeks to make Orthodoxy's teachings on the environment relevant in our everyday lives on a personal and parish level. The site in its few months has garnered much acclaim for its sober approach to the issue of the environment.

Archon Elias and his wife Angela Damianakis MSW LCSW of gotcounseling.us developed the 'Orthopraxis Method' approach to Psychotherapy have three children. Daughter Theophani who attends Holy Cross School of Theology, Stavronikitas who is in the seminary track at Hellenic College, and Euphemia who attends elementary school in Florida.

