**CHRISTIAN SPEECH**

**FOR**

**TONY AMBALATHINGAL**

Hello everyone!!! It’s so wonderful to see you here today, in honor of Koinonia 2022! I want to extend a special hello to Bishop \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, the vicars, priests, and sisters that are here to enjoy this event with us. Although the spirit and meaning of this day and its related events throughout the year are the highlight and culmination of many months of preparation and anticipation, it is on this day that we finally have a moment to acknowledge our connection, celebrate the spirit and importance of our faith, and re-commit ourselves to the the meaning and principles of the foundations we have formed and that guide us, thanks to our devotion to this community.

It is an honor and a privilege to deliver this “Vote of Thanks” speech… and as I am surrounded by all of you… friends, family, children, elders,… all bound by the strength and force of our respective and collective church participation, it is actually all I can think of… giving thanks to all of you. No matter the capacity you’ve taken on to be a part of this event, it’s important to realize and acknowledge that each one of us is interdependent…. Each one of us creates a meaning and a reason to be here and to celebrate. There would be no activities… no events…. no participation without each one of you. Your presence is vital… your enthusiasm is infections…. Your contribution is inspirational.

Let us remember the meaning of the term “Koinonia,” and that explains exactly why we are here. In Matthew 22:39, we learn, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” While many of us may tend to live in a more solitary state, that is not what was intended for humanity. We are community… we are family…. And whether we are near or far… whether we have places to go or people to see, we are part of an entity, one that worships the power of faith and the strength of being there for one another. While the word “Koinonia” has its roots in the Greek language, and while some say that there is no real, direct translation for the word, we all know what it means… “fellowship, association, community, communion, joint participation.” Based on that set of defining terms, I think it’s safe to say that we are doing really well!!

Although our organizing committees and volunteers do an incredible job of creating, preparing, and making sure each event and activity runs smoothly and maximizes participation and enjoyment, we cannot forget the hours… days… weeks of planning and coordination that are invested by these very special people. Speak to anyone that has worked behind the scenes on these events, and I know they will tell you that while nothing comes easy, it is with brotherhood and a communal spirit of working together to achieve a goal that provides the richest experience. That sense of community that extends from the planning to participation and on to acknowledgement, truly defines and gives life to the spirit of “Koinonia.”

We have made it to this wonderful Grand Finale event, which means we celebrate a deeply enriching sense of completion…this is the point at which we really acknowledge and declare a true vote of thanks… I am humbled and thankful to say just how blessed we are…. This year has given us unforgettable events such as Sports Day… a day in which we showed our athletic “prowess.” We ran, we jumped. We encouraged each other to experience a sense of achievement, and **EVERYONE** was a winner. We fed our souls and marveled at terrific flavors at Foodfest, where we learned even more about the tastier aspects of our diverse and historic backgrounds. And of course, Parish Day, in which the stage and talent offerings gave us a wonderful opportunity to experience cultural pride. Each event was able to be accomplished thanks to the talented people behind the scenes… I want to acknowledge and give a huge “Thank You” to the committees and individuals who ”worked their magic” to make sure the performances and events were exciting, informative, and most of all, spiritually and communally uplifting!!

We’ve celebrated so many segments of life… we’ve learned and experienced valuable lessons from each one, once again, celebrating the true spirit of Koininia. No matter the vantage point you’ve had for the past several months of events and celebrations… whether you were a volunteer or participant…. Whether you presented delicacies at Foodfest or tasted something for the first time… whether you were part of the cultural presentations that taught us so much about various aspects of life as diverse talents were celebrated, whether you ran a race or cheered someone on at Sports Day, you embodied, represented, and celebrated the spirit of community and faith… of Koinonia. For that, there is much gratitude. Here’s to all of you…the Parish Day committee and all of the dedicated sub-committees: welcome, food, prize-awards, finance, cultural, stage, venue mgmt., audio & visual . I want to thank each and everyone of you for your commitment and enthusiasm.

In the end, as we prepare to clean up our spaces and join the grand dinner, I want to emphasize that what we should realize is that we are here to serve, and through service, we find our place in this world. A wise person once said, “I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and behold, service was joy.” We are all in this together and it is in the act of performing service that we truly find our community. Here’s to acknowledging a wonderful Koinonia 2022… now it’s time to start planning our participation for Koinonia 2023!, Thank you all!!