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THE CROWN COUNCIL OF ETHIOPIA

HIS IMPERIAL HIGHNESS PRINCE ERMIAS SAHLE-SELASSIE HAILE-SELASSIE
PRESIDENT

HIH Prince Ermias Celebrates Meskel Eve

26 September 2026 / 16 መስከረም 2019

Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Christians around the world celebrated Meskel Eve with Demera bonfires and colorful processions and ceremonies. The metro New York City area had a truly special celebration, but due to fire codes and local ordinances, the only church in the Newark, New Jersey region that is actually allowed to light their bonfire is the magnificent Bistrate Gabriel Church.

This year's celebration was made even more special because for the first time since 1973 members of the Imperial family were not only present at the Demera celebration, but actually lit the bonfire. H.I.H. Prince Ermias Sahle-Selassie Haile-Selassie, and his son H.I.H. Prince Rufael Ermias Sahle-Selassie lit the bonfire emulating Empress Saint Helena, and following the tradition of their ancestors.



Even with a nor'easter raging, with rain and wind, Ethiopians and friends of Ethiopia came great distances to celebrate. Prince Ermias gave a short and impactful speech asking for all to pray for peace in our homeland and an end to the trials of the past. He recalled that he had accompanied his grandfather when the Emperor went to light the Demera, but had never lit one himself, so he was deeply honored to be asked to do so. He was followed by the senior clergyman present and the Archpriest of the local Amanuel Church who tearfully recalled the man to whom the Prince referred as "my grandfather." He stated His Imperial Majesty Emperor Haile Selassie was a man who was so respected he made all Ethiopians respected, and then said "look how far we have fallen."

Their Imperial Highnesses were guests of honour at the historic Abyssinian Baptist Church where Emperor Haile Selassie visited in 1954 during his first state visit to the United States. His Imperial Majesty had been accompanied by his youngest son, Prince Sahle Selassie at the time, and he presented the Church with a magnificent silver processional cross (coincidentally made by RET Board President Solomon Kibriye's grandfather Dejene Belayneh and great-uncle Shiferaw Belayneh who both worked in the palace jewelry workshop) as a thank you to the church and the Harlem community for their solidarity with Ethiopia throughout the war with fascist Italy.



The Emperor had handed the Cross to the Reverend Adam Clayton Powell, pastor of the church and later a noted congressman. That Cross remains enshrined in the church and serves as their emblem. Following in the footsteps of his grandfather and father, Prince Ermias and his son Prince Rufael were received with great honor there as well.

Interested parties who wish to support the charitable and cultural efforts of the Royal Ethiopian Trust (RET), of which Prince Ermias is patron, should visit www.royalethiopiantrust.org and see all that the RET trying to achieve.