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Archbishop Elpidophoros Remarks at the Greek Independence Day Grand Banquet, The Federation of Hellenic Societies of Greater New York



His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America

Remarks at the Greek Independence Day Grand Banquet

The Federation of Hellenic Societies of Greater New York

March 29, 2025

The New York Hilton, New York, NY

Your Eminence, Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Patras,

Honorable Representatives of Greece and Cyprus,

Honorable Congressional and New York State Representatives,

Noble Officers and Soldiers of the Τάγμα Εὐζώνων,

Distinguished Grand and Honorary Marshalls of the 2025 Parade,

General Chairman and Master of Ceremonies Philip Christopher, together with the 2025 Greek Independence Parade Committee,

Grand Benefactor Ambassador George Tunis, and all the Platinum, Diamond, and Gold Benefactors,

Esteemed Leadership and Members of the Federation of Hellenic Societies of Greater New York,

Your Graces, and Reverend and Very Reverend Clergy,

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Tonight, on the eve of our Annual Greek Independence Day Parade, we gather in honor of the Immortal Heroes of 1821 with this Banquet of Patriotic Pride and Purpose. Our pride is manifest in every eye, every heart, and every hand that has come together to ensure that our March up the Fifth Avenue tomorrow is a profound expression worthy of the Community of Hellenes and Philhellenes of the Greater Tri-State Omogeneia.

Our Purpose is to enrich the lives of our Faithful Greek Orthodox People with this joyous reminder of the legacy and history of our Γένος, and to engage them with the multitude of opportunities of service and the manifestation of what it means to be Greek in our world today. For to be a Greek is more than a matter of blood. It is a matter of heart, of soul, and of mind.

As I look around this Banquet Hall, what I see is a magnificent Bridge, extending from the Avenues of New York City to the Plateias of Athens. And upon this most excellent and unshakeable Bridge, I behold the fulness – the Πλήρωμα of Hellenism in all its glorious manifestations.

Leading on this Bridge from across the Atlantic, is His Eminence Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Patras, who is gracing us this year with his venerable presence, and who will lead us in worship tomorrow at the Holy Trinity Cathedral.

Your Eminence: you are the very incarnation of the spirit of Ὁ Παλαιῶν Πατρῶν Γερμανός Γ' — who infused the Revolutionaries of 1821 on the Feast of the Annunciation at Agia Lavra with the spirit of the liberty and blessed their courage. You stand on this towering Bridge that spans Greece and America, and your blessing upon us all is a great boon for all the Faithful.

Greece and America, my friends. The world's oldest Democracy, and the world's greatest Democracy. And standing on this Bridge are the Most Honorable Representatives of both.

In the persons of New York State Senate Deputy Minority Leader Michael Giannaris, and these United States Congressional Representatives:

The Honorable Grace Meng,

The Honorable Mike Lawler, and

The Honorable Nicole Malliotakis,

we behold the ideals of American Government and a stellar representation of the Good People of the Empire State.

And with the distinguished First Vice President of the Hellenic Republic, the Honorable Georgios Georgantas, and the President of PASOK-KINAL, the main opposition party, the Honorable Nikos Androulakis, we regard in the highest esteem the Government of Greece, the foundation of all Western Democracies and the Cradle of Western Civilization.

From both sides of this Bridge, stretching mystically between Fifth Avenue and Syntagma Square, we experience the privilege of being members of the Πόλις – which was known in Ancient Athens as the Ἑκκλησία, the Assembly of those called out to the special purpose of the common good.

Our Bridge possesses the Ἑκκλησία in both its iterations: the original Political, and the subsequent Ecclesiastical. Tonight is truly a revelation of our Hellenic and Orthodox roots – which, in 1821, flowered into the fruits of the Immortal Heroes of 1821.

Keeping watch over this Bridge are the Noble Officers and Soldiers of the Τάγμα Εὐζώνων – the Elite Presidential Guard of the Republic. They stand in silent guardianship of the values and principles for which one is willing to sacrifice one's very life. We are all so deeply grateful to the President of the Republic for the

permission to include them in our solemn observances of Greek Independence Day, as well as to the members of the Committee that have ensured their participation in our festivities.

Marching on this Bridge – shoulder to shoulder like a mighty phalanx of resolve, resilience, and the pure genius of the Greek mind and spirit – are personages of immense honor and significance.

Our Grand Marshals:

General Andrew P. Poppas, the Commanding General of the United States Armed Forces Command,

Evangelos Marinakis, Businessman Extraordinaire and Philanthropist, leading as President the famed Olympiacos Football Club,

And the sacred person of Metropolitan Chrysostomos.

Together with our Honorary Marshals, the extraordinary Christoforos Papakaliatis and the incomparable Pyrros Dimas, this Bridge is teeming with the talent, energy, and ingenuity of the shining Greek-American Constellation, led by such entrepreneurial, political, and societal luminaries as our dear friend and Archdiocesan Vice-Chairman John Catsimatidis, and our Grand Benefactor, Ambassador George Tsunis.

This miraculous Bridge that connects the Diaspora with the Motherland is a product of a group of remarkable Patriots and Compatriots: The Federation of Hellenic Societies of Greater New York. I cannot express enough the gratitude of all to the Ὁμοσπονδία for their amazing efforts and preparations that make of our Parade up Fifth Avenue, the magnificent event that it is every year.

You have built a Bridge between Nations, between Cultures, between Languages, and have given to Hellenes and Philhellenes alike a sacred space, if you will, where we can walk together ἐν ἐνὶ στόματι καὶ μιᾷ καρδίᾳ, as we pray in every Divine Liturgy.

Therefore and in closing, let us commit to one another to always keep this Bridge open to all who would traverse it. It is a two-way spiritual, political, and cultural superhighway that brings us together in marvelous concourses of shared values and goals.

As we enjoy all the festivities of the Parade, let us take a moment to remember that the liberties of 1821 which we celebrate, are part and parcel of our Γένος,

which is led by our Holy Mother Church, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.

Brothers and Sisters: I thank you for all you do for the good of our Λαός! I thank you for your presence and your participation. I thank you for your love of our Πατρίδα and our Πίστη.

Ζήτω ἡ Ἑλλάδα!

Ζήτω τὸ Ἑλληνικὸ Ἔθνος! Ζήτω!

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