

## Archepiscopal Encyclical on the Fourth of July, July 4, 2025



Unto the Most Reverend and Right Reverend Hierarchs, Pious Priests and Deacons, the Monks and Nuns, Presidents and Members of Parish Councils, Honorable Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Members of Leadership 100, the Day and Afternoon Schools, Philoptochos Societies, the Youth, Greek Orthodox Organizations, and the entirety of the Christ-named Plenitude of the Sacred Archdiocese of America:

Ἐὰν ὑμεῖς μένητε ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τῷ ἐμῷ, ἀληθῶς μαθηταί μου ἔστε, καὶ γνώσεσθε τὴν ἀλήθειαν, καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια ἐλευθερώσει ὑμᾶς. (κατὰ Ἰωάννην 8:31-32)

If you abide in My Message, then you are truly My followers, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. (John 8:31-32)

My beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord,

The Fourth of July is much more than the American celebration of liberty. It is the memory of that moment of the turning of the tide, when a people who were abused

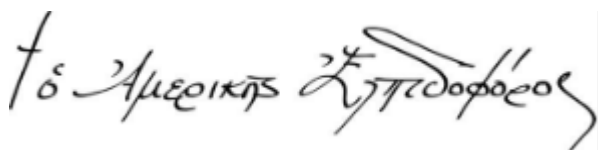
by the powerful chose to stand up for themselves and grasp for the freedom that their conscience told them was their “unalienable right.” And this is the very same liberty that we constantly strive to preserve and ensure in this blessed American land for the liberties of all people, regardless of their race, ethnicity, religion, or national origin. However, a true freedom that is equal for every human being can only come from God, in the inner person.

The Lord Jesus Christ told His disciples that the truth would set them free. But in a world where the truth oftentimes appears to be obscured, we find ourselves frequently asking the same question as the man who ordered the crucifixion of our Lord did two millennia ago, “What is truth?” If we are able to know the truth of things, then we must also recognize that the condition for that knowledge is abiding in the Logos — the Message of the One Who ascended the Cross of His own free will for our salvation.

Therefore, freedom and truth are inextricably linked in the person of our Savior. If we are not truthful people — or in other words, if we are not of the truth, as the Lord answered Pontius Pilate (John 18:37) — then our perception will always be shackled to our own personal opinions or our willingness to blindly follow the views of others and not the Logos of the Word of God. And this, my dear friends, is contrary to the ethos and authentic perspective of the Orthodox Church and the Gospel.

On our Nation’s Birthday, then, when the entire world and our Country yearn for truth and peace — the firm and unyielding hallmarks of a genuine life in Christ — let us commit to truly being Christ’s followers. The Lord understands our need for freedom and knowledge, but He bestows them upon us in proportion to the measure of our faithfulness and the good deeds that we perform as His servants. Let us, therefore, strive to be honest disciples of His Divine Word, so that we may “know the truth” (John 8:32) and be truly free!

With much paternal love in Christ,

A handwritten signature in Greek script, reading "† Ἐλπίδοφος Ἐπισκοπός", which translates to "† Elpidophoros Bishop". The signature is written in a fluid, cursive style with dark ink.

† ELPIDOPHOROS

Archbishop of America