

Archiepiscopal Encyclical for the Commemoration of OXI Day



OXI Day

To the Most Reverend Hierarchs, the reverend priests and deacons, the monks and nuns, the Presidents and Members of the Parish Councils of the Greek Orthodox Communities, the distinguished Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Day, Afternoon, and Church Schools, the Philoptochos Sisterhoods, the Youth, the Hellenic Organizations, and the entire Greek Orthodox family in America

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ,

On this day as we celebrate the valiant stand against the Axis forces who demanded the surrender of Greece, we sing a beautiful hymn to the Theotokos and Ever Virgin Mary affirming the holy protection she offers to the people of God. This hymn acknowledges the power of faith as demonstrated by our fathers and mothers through their support for the “NO” delivered by Prime Minister Ioannis Metaxas on October 28, 1940 in response to the ultimatum of Fascist regimes. Today we sing to the Theotokos, “You protect your people so mindfully, from every

plot of the enemy; for as shelter, protector and helper have we you, as we cry out to you: Glory to Your wonders, O Pure one, glory to your divine shelter, glory to your concern for us, O Undefined one.” (Hymn of the Feast)

The feast of the Protection resonates with our commemoration of OXI Day because of our deep faith we have in God and the protection offered by the Virgin Mary. As our forbearers stood strong in faith against their adversaries, we can be assured in times of trial that with confidence we can draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:16) We can do this for we know that with God as our rock and refuge we are protected by the Theotokos, and through our faith we are secure in Christ unto eternal life.

We are also assured of the protection of the Theotokos during times of struggle and sacrifice because of our love for God. The Virgin Mary offers us a beautiful example of this love in her commitment to the will of God and in the service of love she offered throughout her life. She continues to share the grace of God in protecting the faithful. As the people of Greece were inspired by her witness to pursue independence and freedom in 1821, and stood firm in her protection in 1940, so too are we called by our hymns and our commemoration to experience the grace of God and to seek her shelter.

We sing the hymn of the feast and offer our praise and thanksgiving to God because through the Theotokos we know what is true, honorable and just. This confidence in the truth, in the essential value of freedom, and in justice emboldened the people of Greece to stand against the forces of tyranny. From their example and with the protection of the Virgin Mary, we are able to stand boldly for truth, for the value of life, for freedom and justice, and for any who are in need. We are inspired by our ancestors and their courage. We are also strengthened through the power of faith, the abundance of God’s grace, the assurance of His promises, and our commitment to His will.

On this holy feast of the Protection and in our commemorations of OXI Day, may we remember in prayer the sacrifice and struggle of those who stood courageously and found refuge in the Theotokos and in the grace of God. May we also affirm our witness of the power of faith and grace through the trials that we face. Glory to your wonders, O Pure one! Glory to your divine shelter!

With paternal love in Christ,

† ELPIDOPHOROS

Archbishop of America

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