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Archbishop Elpidophoros of America issues Archiepiscopal Encyclical for the feast of the Holy Unmercenaries Saints Cosmas and Damian



His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America has issued the following Archiepiscopal Encyclical for the feast of the Holy Unmercenaries Saints Cosmas and Damian. Read the full text below:

Protocol No. 55/19

**November 1, 2019
Feast of the Holy Unmercenaries
Saints Cosmas and Damian**

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,

As we read in the Holy Scriptures the beloved parables of our Lord, we are guided by His words to consider the call to life in the kingdom of God as an invitation to a banquet. (Luke 14:16-24) In this parable a man prepares a great banquet and sends out his servants with invitations. However, upon receiving an invitation, many offer excuses as to why they cannot attend. When this is reported to the man, he directs his servants as follows: *Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and maimed and blind and lame.* When room still remains, the man instructs again, *Go out to the highways and hedges, and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled.*

In our sacred calling to ministry, these words of our Lord speak to us in many ways. On this day when we commemorate the Holy Unmercenaries, Saints Cosmas and Damian, we reflect on the needs around us and how these two holy men offered their lives and their skills so that God might be glorified. To the sick and suffering they brought solace and compassion. To the poor they offered their gifts with no thought or request for payment. By the grace of God they were given the ability to heal, and freely they gave in return so that bodies and souls could find care and rest through faith in the power of grace.

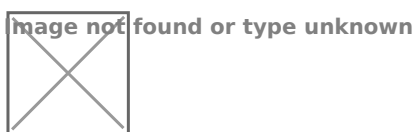
As the servants of Christ we are asked to go out into the highways and hedges to help those in need. We are asked to give action to the Gospel of grace and have compassion for the poor, the suffering, and the sick. We are guided to see both the physical and spiritual needs of all of these as well as for our senior adults, and to address them in a manner that supports and comforts as well as affirms the dignity of life and humanity.

It is on this feast of the Holy Unmercenaries as we remember their service that we also offer our prayers and support for the benevolence ministries of our beloved Ecumenical Patriarchate. Our Mother Church leads us by example through ministries to orphans and the poor and through the services offered at the Baloukli Hospital and elder center. Each year we are led by our National Ladies Philoptochos Society and local Philoptochos chapters in a special offering. This year, I ask that on Sunday, November 3, you show your support for the ministries that continue under very challenging conditions with genuine needs. The support of the faithful of our Holy Archdiocese extends the love we have for both our

Ecumenical Patriarchate and for those in need. It also affirms that we are fulfilling the exhortation of our Lord to go out and bring all in need into His kingdom and into a place that will lead us to peace and eternal life.

On behalf of His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, I offer his deep gratitude for the ongoing support of the Ladies Philoptochos Society and the faithful of our Holy Archdiocese for these ministries. May we continuously pray for all in need, and may we be ready and responsive to bring those in need into the Church and the presence of our Lord so that they may have healing, peace, and joy.

With paternal love in Christ,



**† ELPIDOPHOROS
Archbishop of America**



— Source: goarch.org