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His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America issues Archiepiscopal Encyclical for the feast of Saint Basil and the New Year



His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America has released his Encyclical for the feast of Saint Basil and the New Year. Read the full text below:

January 1, 2020
Feast of Saint Basil and New Year

*If there is any excellence, if there is anything
worthy of praise, think about these things.*
(Philippians 4:8)

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 first day of the year of our Lord 2020, I greet you in His love with a heart filled with joy and peace. Our Incarnate Savior is with us, guiding us in His divine will, granting us wisdom, filling our hearts with hope in His eternal promises, and leading us in our sacred ministry to share the Gospel of salvation.

This is a day that calls us to reflection. We look back on the year that has passed, considering all that has happened, the joys and challenges we have experienced. We look forward into the new year with hope, contemplating the opportunities and possibilities, and reflecting on all that we wish to accomplish.

In our time of introspection that comes with the transition to a new year, we must also be mindful of our relationship with God. When we contemplate the direction of our lives, our hopes and wishes, as well as our opportunities and struggles, we cannot neglect the essential role of our faith and our communion with God in addressing all areas of life. He is the Source and Sustainer of our lives. We are beautifully and wonderfully made for a divine purpose, and only through our faith in Him and His abundant grace are we able to experience and explore the great

potential we have both now and for eternity.

We are blessed on this day to commemorate a great Father and Ecumenical Teacher of the Church, Basil the Great. His life is an embodiment and excellent example of how we commit our lives to the ways of the Lord. Saint Basil revealed the grace and power of God by living in the holy manner in which the faithful in Philippi were exhorted to do by the Apostle Paul: *Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.* (Philippians 4:8) Saint Basil not only thought about these things, he lived them.

In faith and by the grace of God, Saint Basil knew the truth as revealed through Christ, and he preached, taught, and defended the truth throughout his life. He was honorable in character; he was just in addressing the struggles of others; his heart was pure, thus he saw God; his manner and ministry were filled with love and grace. In all things he pursued excellence, which for him was not only grounded in his worship of God, but represented the glorious power of grace and a firm witness of Christ. For Saint Basil, excellence in life was achieved through a life of worship, prayer, and service, and through a life that was transformed by the love of God.

We see this offering of love in the vital work of our home for children, Saint Basil Academy. Named in commemoration of this great saint who built ministries for the sick and suffering, the traveler, and orphans and widows, Saint Basil Academy offers a wholistic environment for the care of the children and youth who live there. Their challenges are met by the love of God through the caring staff, directors and trustees. They experience life that is lovely and gracious, pure and true, and through this they find healing and hope. As we are led by our Ladies Philoptochos chapters in the annual cutting of the Vasilopita, may we offer our prayers and support for the work of Saint Basil Academy. For over 70 years, our Academy has been a place of prayer, compassionate service, and quality care. Your support is a blessing and enhances our sacred ministry to the children and youth.

On this blessed Feast of Saint Basil the Great and the inauguration of a new calendar year, may we reflect on the life of this holy man of God who

pursued excellence in all things. May we commit to deepening our communion with God so that we may do what is true, honorable, pure, lovely, and gracious. Let us reflect on all of these things so that our opportunities and possibilities are imbued with the grace of God, and we are witnesses to all of His Life-Giving presence.

With paternal love in Christ,

† ELPIDOPHOROS
Archbishop of America