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Archbishop Elpidophoros of America issues Archiepiscopal Encyclical for the Feast of St. Photios and the Saint Photios National Shrine



His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America has released his Encyclical for the Feast of St. Photios and the Saint Photios National Shrine. Read the full text below:

February 6, 2020
Feast of Saint Photios
Saint Photios National Shrine 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,

As we celebrate Saint Photios the Great, Patriarch of Constantinople, throughout our Archdiocese, we also remember our first National Shrine, named in his honor. The Saint Photios Greek Orthodox National Shrine, founded by Archbishop Iakovos of blessed memory, commemorates the first known Greeks who came to America in the 18th century, long before their distant cousins would begin arriving nearly one hundred years later.

Gracefully set at the Avero House in historic St. Augustine, Florida (the oldest city in the United States), the Shrine, as Saint Photios himself might have said, is a humble palace "of the memory of love and consolation" (Bibliotheca 545:18-19). It is a place where we can remember our ancestors – whomever they may be, who came to these blessed shores in search of a better life and brought their precious Orthodox Christian Faith with them. Thus, the Shrine is also a symbol of the calling of the Church to bring the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ to all people, even to the uttermost ends of the earth (Acts 1:8), just as our fathers and mothers brought the Orthodox Faith to America. It is not without significance that the Orthodox Christian Mission Center is also in St. Augustine, echoing the mission that is remembered by engaging missionaries!

Therefore, we celebrate this day, the Saint, the Shrine, and the sacred vocation that we all have to share the love and peace of Christ. Over a thousand years ago, Saint Photios the Great sent the Holy Brothers, Cyril and Methodios to Rus, to bring the light of Christ to the Slavs. And today, the great Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew has renewed this light by granting Autocephaly to the Ukrainian People. Our mission goes on, until the Lord of Glory returns.

May we all remember those who have gifted us with the light of Christ, and continue to let it shine in our lives, our families, our parishes and our Church everywhere, through the prayers of Saint Photios and all the saints who in every generation, are well-pleasing to Him.

With paternal love in our Lord Jesus Christ,

† ELPIDOPHOROS
Archbishop of America