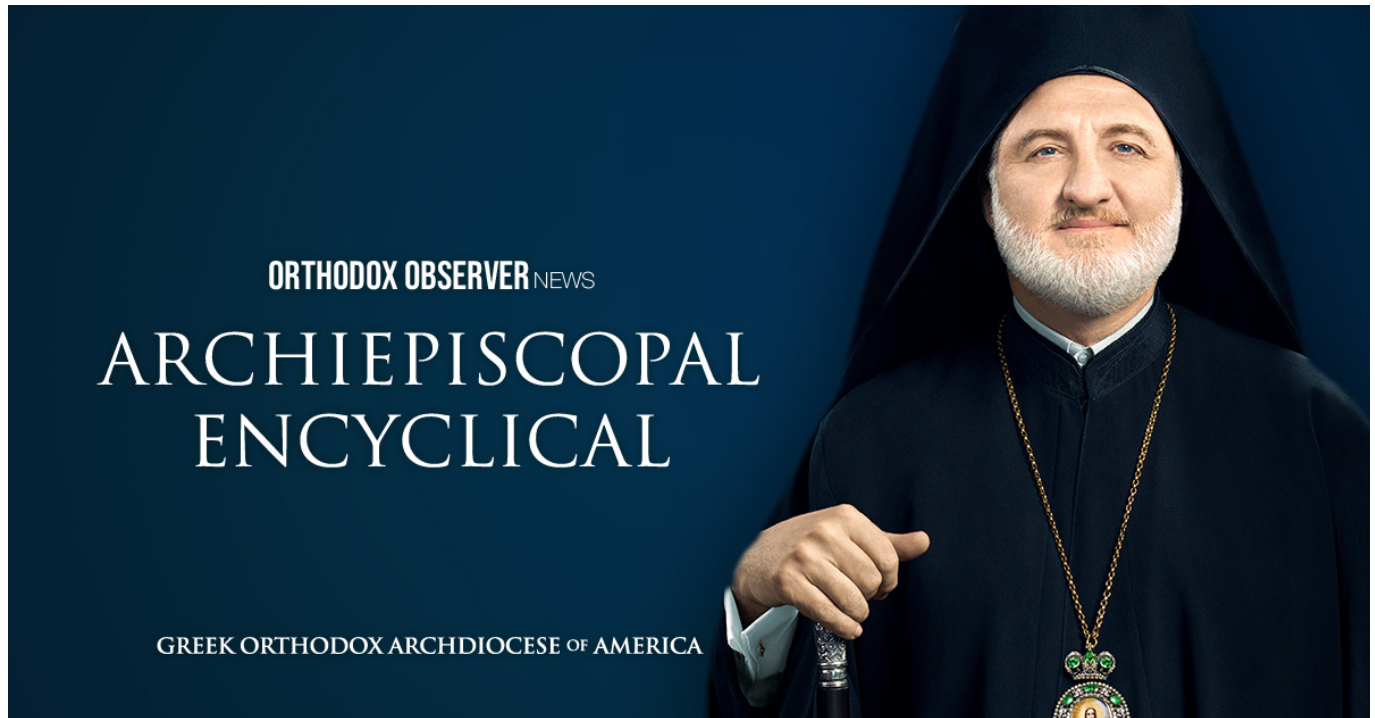


ENCYCLICAL OF HIS EMINENCE ARCHBISHOP ELPIDOPHOROS OF AMERICA



The Fourth of July, 2020

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 your Archbishop of America, it is truly a joy to celebrate with you the Fourth of July, the day when all Americans and indeed the whole world commemorate our Independence Day. Even though this Declaration was made on July 4, 1776 in Philadelphia, the fight for liberty commenced much earlier, on April 19, 1775, in Lexington and Concord, where at the Old North Bridge, as the poet Ralph Waldo Emerson later sang:

By the rude bridge that arched the flood,

Their flag to April's breeze unfurled,

Here once the embattled farmers stood
And fired the shot heard round the world.

Our legacy of that victory, and of the sacrifice of every generation of Americans who, in President Abraham Lincoln's immortal words at Gettysburg, "gave the last full measure of devotion," is not to take bridges, but to build bridges.

We have to be honest about the divisions in our Nation and how polarized our society feels, especially in the continuing aftermath of the pandemic and the social unrest over basic inequities in our land. Building bridges of dialogue, of mutual respect, of seeking shared understanding – these are the best of America and honor the heroes who have kept America "the land of the free and home of the brave." The strength of America is our diversity, our plurality, for "E Pluribus Unum" – out of many, we are one!

My beloved Christians, as we celebrate the greatness of our Nation on the Fourth of July, let us remember how we attained the exceptional freedoms we all enjoy, and work to ensure these freedoms are true for every American. Let us engage one another with vigor and commitment, "speaking the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15) on every vital issue, even as we hold in dear remembrance those who made the ultimate sacrifice for God and country.

With paternal love in our Lord Jesus Christ,

†ELPIDOPHOROS

Archbishop of America

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