

Encyclical by His Eminence Archbishop Nikitas of Thyateira and Great Britain on the occasion of “OXI Day”



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Beloved in the Lord:

In this month of October, when we celebrate the feasts of so many great Saints of the Church, we also bring to mind the Feast of the Protection of the Most Holy Theotokos. We, especially, remember the Virgin Mary, our Protectress, as we recall the times of the occupation of Greece and the hopes for freedom, especially on October 28th – the day we remember as “OXI Day”.

During those dark days of the Second World War when the troops of the Axis Powers marched across Europe and occupied lands and nations, the Hellenic people refused to bend to the demands of a tyrant and his dreams of power and

glory. The nation of Greece stood up unanimously to the evil forces of the Axis Powers and like the Prime Minister Ioannis Metaxas who refused to submit to foreign domination and rule, shouted, "OXI-NO!" to subjugation and occupation. As the cold days of winter approached, the voices of ancient heroes called the daughters and sons Hellenes to rise to the challenge and defend their motherland, so they might fulfil the words of Lord Byron who wrote "that Greece might still be free". The land of democracy and the cradle of Western civilization could not accept the yoke of slavery and a foreign master. We, as the inheritors of this legacy, are called to remain true and loyal to the universal values, ideals, principles, and basic truths of our ancestors, especially in these days and times when the world seems to have lost its path and we see the rise of populism. The values of acceptance, respect, and so many other virtuous ideals are challenged.

We remember the women who carried the supplies to the soldiers in the Pindos mountains. We recall the clergy who served Liturgy in the snow and prayed for the salvation of those who fought in the cold of winter. We cannot forget those who were deported to concentration camps and the many who lost their lives there. The voice of Sophia Vempe resounds in our hearts and minds, as she sings and calls the people to defend truth and freedom. We think of the masses who went to the streets and showed their support for the decision to say "OXI - NO!" to oppression. This day is a celebration for all people who value and honour the treasured ideals that have been preserved and handed down to us and we must share these with the younger generation.

In every moment and time of injustice and in the struggle for truth, honour, and justice, the Church has gathered her children to stand up and defend truth and She now invites them to hear the stories of the past and also to sing praises to God in thanksgiving for the gift of freedom. Hellenes throughout the world - in Greece, on Cyprus, here in the United Kingdom, and all philhellenes, are all called to mark the day and honour the heroes of the past and their struggles and dreams.

The efforts of these heroes and the simple people who defended Greece and Truth were not in vain. Let us, then, keep their dreams and hopes alive in our hearts and minds, as we affirm their decision to act. Let us also cry out and say "OXI-NO" to injustice and the violations against human rights. Let us say "OXI-NO" to any transgression and force that distorts truth and justice. But, let us also stand firm in our commitment to be true, honourable, and just in all we do, as people and citizens of this world, remembering always the words of our Lord, "You are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14).

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+ NIKITAS
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