

Archbishop of Canada Sotirios issues encyclical for the New Year



The Archbishop of Canada, His Eminence Sotirios, issued an encyclical for the New Year, where he also referred to the coming year as the anniversary of the start of the struggle to free the Greek nation from dour and backwards Ottoman rule. The Archbishop also touched on the ongoing tribulation faced by humanity in the form of the coronavirus pandemic.

Among others, he stated *"...God has signed in favour of our salvation with His sacrifice on the Cross. His sacrifice is not for nothing. But our salvation requires our consent and our effort...The road ahead is difficult. The struggle is great. But the expected return is tremendous in securing the progress of Orthodoxy and Hellenism in Canada, in order to triumph over the present, and even more importantly, for our place in heaven."*

The encyclical reads:

Year 2021

Study the Past – Plan for the Future

An Encyclical for New Year's Day

Archbishop Sotirios of Canada

Let us sit and talk for a moment. Let us discuss our sorrows and our troubles. Let us reminisce about the days of old, as well as the most recent past.

If we could go back 200 years, we would come across the so-called Old Man of the Morea, the Greek General Theodoros Kolokotronis. Let us pay careful attention to what he would tell us. Can you hear him? This is what he would say:

"God has signed in favour of Greece's freedom and He does not take back His signature." A handful of brave young men took an oath: freedom or death. For the Holy Faith of Christ. For the freedom of the homeland. For the honor of the family. Who expected the disorganized, the ragged, the barefoot, the unarmed to succeed in revolution? They were victorious, because they believed in God. They believed in themselves. They believed in their intended purpose. In a purpose which was just.

In 2021, we celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Greek revolution. Let us however remember a few more things.

The year 2020 was full of sadness, disasters and problems. The coronavirus turned everything upside down. What did we do? We did not, nor will we now, stand idly by. The vaccine is here. The coronavirus will be defeated.

The coronavirus was and remains a useful lesson for us all. Why did God allow it? Nobody knows. Is it because of our arrogance? Is it a result of our selfishness? Does it relate to our infidelity? Why did we think that we could dethrone God and sit on His Throne? Do you remember what Eosphorus suffered? He hurtled and crashed very badly. Do you remember what happened to the smoke? With the first puff of

wind, it dissolved. The same happens to those who forget about God, whose selfishness does not allow them to see what is taking place right in front of them.

We are now at the beginning of 2021. What will we do? Our enemies remain the same. Satan does not change his ways. Neither does Turkey change its ways. Will we surrender? No. We will plan for the future, with faith in God, with faith in ourselves, with confidence in our intended purpose.

This is how we will be victorious. Whatever the threats we face, we will succeed. We are ready to respond to any enemy with the third great 'No'. The first was the "Molon labe" ("Come and take them"). The second was the glorious 'No' of 1940. With respect to the Revolution of 1821, our victory is beyond dispute. As for the third 'No,' it will be two-fold. It is a 'No' to Satan and a 'No' to every other enemy.

Our resolution is to eradicate every evil from ourselves. To raise our children with faith, and to keep them close to the Church. The sapling needs careful attention to become a tree. It needs to be watered, to be raked, to be pruned, to be fertilized. In order to develop into a virtuous person and a true Christian, a child needs much more of our consideration, much more of our attention, much more of our care. If we do not fulfil this sacred duty of ours, we will not win the war. We will have lost everything.

Let us live in Canada like a real family. The Church is our home. Let us take care of our churches, our schools, our institutions, the youth and the elderly, our parents and grandparents. Let us be united around the Church, let us be tied to the Church like strings on a guitar. When the strings are tied to the guitar with the proper tension, then there is harmony and great progress.

God has signed in favour of our salvation with His sacrifice on the Cross. His sacrifice is not for nothing. But our salvation requires our consent and our effort. Is it in our interest to deny it? No. No more needs to be said.

The road ahead is difficult. The struggle is great. But the expected return is tremendous in securing the progress of Orthodoxy and Hellenism in Canada, in order to triumph over the present, and even more importantly, for our place in heaven.

All together. All advancing forward. All of us holding hands and walking together. Let no one be left behind. Let us not be afraid. God Is with us. The victory is ours. Let us move forward together. Happy New Year with Christ at the helm!

With fatherly love and blessings in the Newborn Christ,

ARCHBISHOP SOTIRIOS

GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF CANADA