

ENCYCLICAL OF HIS EMINENCE ARCHBISHOP NIKITAS OF THYATEIRA AND GREAT BRITAIN ON THE 200TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE REVOLUTION OF 25 MARCH 1821



Encyclical on the occasion of the anniversary of the 25th March 1821

The 25th of March is a special day in the hearts of Greek Orthodox faithful around the world. It is the day when we celebrate deliverance from the twofold bondage of sin and of slavery. It is the day we recall the proclamation of the Archangel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary and her free acceptance of God's will for the salvation of mankind, just as we remember the resounding cry of "liberty or death" and the ultimate sacrifices courageously made for the freedom of a nation.

As a community and as the people of God, we sustain in our living memory the moment when the Word became flesh, "for our sake and for our salvation". In an instant, the age of darkness and the shadow of sin ended and the Son of Man came to live among us, fulfilling the words of the great Isaiah and of all the Prophets. A virgin conceived and history was transfigured. Saint Romanos the Melodist poetically embellishes this moment in his Kontakion "On the Mother of God" with a reflection by the Archangel, "God has planned that the whole of corrupted

humanity should be renewed from you". Christ, the New Adam, will in time be born of Mary and the doors of Paradise, which were once-closed, will now open for all to enter. The human mind cannot comprehend this great miracle, nor the depths of God's love for the world. The Saints of our Church point to the Annunciation as one of the greatest Feasts of the Church, since it is the beginning of our salvation. As the Psalmist says, "this is the day which the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it".

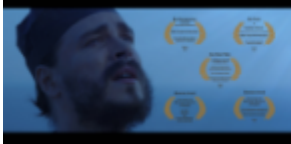
This year, our celebration carries special meaning as it marks the passing of two hundred years since the declaration of independence from the Ottoman yoke on March 25, 1821. It was a day when the Hellenes placed all their hope in God and asked for the intercessions of the Most-Holy Theotokos. After some four hundred years of occupation, they yearned "that Greece might still be free", as Lord Byron wrote. They dreamed of independence and they aspired to freedom — as do all people. Women and men took up arms, calling to mind inspiration from heroes of the past. They remembered the deeds of Thermopylae and the Battle of Salamis, and prayed that God might send such noble figures to lead the people once again. An elderly clergyman, Metropolitan Germanos, raised the banner of independence and soon the call for freedom was on the lips of the nation. Hellenes throughout the world embraced the cause and sent their children to join in the sacred struggle, just as they offered their personal fortunes to cover the costs of the war.

Today, we appeal to young Hellenes and Philhellenes everywhere to remember the sacrifices of the generations that came before us and to hold on to the values, traditions, and ideals of our ancestors. We must keep alive the flame of the dream that "Greece might still be free" and that the waters of the Aegean may be a sea of peace and tranquillity. We are blessed and fortunate to live in this historic time and I ask that we do not let today go by without celebration. We ask that families rejoice together on this anniversary, honouring with thanksgiving the great gift of freedom. Let our voices join the heroes of the past as we shout "Zito!", and may the memories of those sung and unsung heroes, together with their bold vision, live on in our hearts and in future generations. May the great powers that once stood with Greece — Great Britain, France and Russia — continue to stand next to her in solidarity, and may God bless us all.

London, March 2021

With paternal festal blessings

+ Archbishop NIKITAS of Thyateira and Great Britain



Saint Joseph the Hesychast

Documentary



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