

Reflection for the Feast of the Annunciation and the 200 - Year Commemoration of the Greek Revolution



My beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord,

On March 25, the Feast of the Annunciation of the Theotokos, the Greek people across the world will celebrate the bi-centennial of the beginning of the Greek War of Independence. While it is an independence day celebration, we also know that the independent state of Greece would not be finally realized until 1829. And as our history books record, it would take more than a century for other parts of Greece, such as the island of Crete, to free themselves from the Ottoman yoke, and become part of the Greek nation.

The Greeks who proclaimed their independence from the Ottomans on March 25, 1821 had been inspired by the ideals of the American and French revolutions. In those revolutions, it was the pursuit of the rights of citizens, to have one's voice heard in governance, and to have a choice in their leaders that led to the overthrow of the monarchies that ruled over them. As the Declaration of Independence reads, "Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed." Famously, Adamantios Koraes and Thomas Jefferson had exchanged letters on the issue of independence. Later on, Ioannis Kapodistrias, who saw himself as the champion of the common, ordinary Greek citizen, who sought to be free from Ottoman oppression, would lead the new

Greek nation. While these events happened two centuries ago, they are still potent forces in our world as we watch oppressive regimes subjugate their population, whether they are minorities or seeking a greater voice in the affairs of their nations.

Spiritually, those Greek revolutionaries had been nurtured by their Orthodox Christian Faith, which teaches that God Himself is free and that because we are created in His image and likeness (Genesis 1:26), we too must live as free persons. They had been nurtured by the resurrection of Christ, who freed all creation from the shackles of death.

As an Archdiocese, we join our brothers and sisters in Greece and throughout the world in this celebration. In the Metropolis of San Francisco, we are organizing events and provide educational resources to celebrate this momentous anniversary of Greek independence and our Hellenic heritage. In these events we want to celebrate our past to be sure, but we also want to edify all who attend with our faith and its commitment to human rights and freedom from oppressive forces. So, when we raise our Greek flags in celebration, let us also lift our voices in prayer and thanksgiving for the hard-fought freedom of our ancestors. As people who have been blessed with liberty and freedom in Greece and in the United States, we must find ways to see that blessing expanded to the still many people in the world who live under oppressive conditions.

It was not a mere coincidence that the Greeks raised their flags and joined together in their pursuit of freedom on March 25, 1821. As devout Orthodox Christians, they knew this day stood for liberation from death, despair and hopelessness, that was conquered through the Virgin Mary's acceptance of the message from the Archangel Gabriel that she would bear Christ. The Theotokos, as our mother and fervent intercessor, was implored by the Greeks on March 25 - the day that "marks the crowning of our salvation" as we sing in the Apolytikion for the Feast of the Annunciation.

In the Gospel of Luke, Mary shares with Elizabeth, “He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts, he has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree” (Luke 1:51-52). Jesus Christ is our liberator. In His Resurrection, he frees us from the shackles of darkness and death, and lifts us to the light of life, making us new. Saint Paul writes, “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold the new has come.” (2 Corinthians 5:17)

My beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord, let us honor the memory of our forebears who sought liberation from their oppressors. Use this bi-centennial as an opportunity to deepen your knowledge of our history. Let us accept, with grateful hearts, the gifts of freedom and salvation that our Savior offers. When you attend the Divine Liturgy on March 25, rejoice in the Good News that is announced to Mary because that Good News is meant for you and for all people!

Hronia Polla to those who celebrate their Feast today, and I pray that God blesses you all in the coming weeks as we continue to journey to His Holy Resurrection.

God bless you!

