03/06/2021

Archiepiscopal Encyclical on the National Sisterhood of Presvyteres Sunday



Unto the Most Reverend and Right Reverend Hierarchs, Pious Priests and Deacons, the Monks and Nuns, Presidents and Members of Parish Councils, Honorable Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Members of Leadership 100, the Day and Afternoon Schools, Philoptochos Societies, the Youth, Greek Orthodox Organizations, and the entirety of the Christ-named Plenitude of the Holy Archdiocese of America.

My Beloved Brothers and Sisters in the Risen Christ,

Χριστὸς Ἀνέστη! Christ is Risen!

Μενοῦνγε μακάριοι οἱ ἀκούοντες τὸν λόγον τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ φυλάσσοντες αὐτόν. (Λουκ. 11:28)

Indeed! Most truly so! Blessed are those who listen to the word of God and keep it!

(Luke 11:28)

Finally, the day has arrived for the Church to dedicate a Sunday and celebrate all our Presvyteres throughout the Holy Archdiocese of America. This National Sisterhood of Presvyteres Sunday — on the closest Sunday to June 4th, the Feastday of the Holy Sisters Mary and Martha — is being set aside, not because our Presvyteres deserve only one Sunday, but because we must have a national day of recognition for every Sunday, and indeed every day, that they so diligently and willingly serve the Body of Christ. Theirs is a role of both deep faith and contemplation, and of tremendous activity. Therefore, their heavenly patrons are Mary and Martha, the sisters of Lazaros, who manifested the best of both stillness and service.

We read of these sisters of Lazaros at all the great feasts of the Theotokos (Luke 10:38-42, 11:27-28), and in particular at the Dormition. In the Gospel pericope for this great feast, we see the paralleled uncompromising service of our Presvyteres, a diakonia that is based in prayer and action. And this Reading concludes with an affirmation from our Lord Himself, of the blessedness of all those who truly hear His words and observe them. In this, we see that Martha and Mary are equals, and that they imitate the Theotokos herself. For all our Presvyteres, whose dedication and devotion to the Church is matched by their dedication to their families, all of us owe a tremendous debt of gratitude.

Therefore, let us honor their sacrifice and their labors on this Sunday every year with special observances and hallmarks of gratitude. But let us never forget that our Presvyteres are with us every day, supporting their husbands and children, and setting examples of faith, hope, and love that lead our Faithful to not only hear the words of God, but to keep, preserve, and guard them in their hearts.

Χριστὸς Ἀνέστη! Ἀληθῶς Ἀνέστη!

Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!



† ELPIDOPHOROS

Archbishop of America
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