30/06/2021

Archiepiscopal Encyclical on the Fourth of July



July 4, 2021

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 Christ,

Αἰνεῖτε τὸν Κύριον πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, ἐπαινέσατε Αὐτὸν πάντες οἱ λαοί! (Ψαλμός 116:1)

Praise the Lord, all Nations; laud Him, all peoples! (Psalm 116:1, LXX)

As we gather with family and friends to celebrate our National holiday of the Fourth of July, let us all pause to give thanks for our American democracy. Like every form of governing the πόλις, it will always be less than perfect, for the human beings who conduct the affairs of state and the rule of law are imperfect as well. But let us rejoice that what we have witnessed in our land – from coast to coast – is a willingness to confront the injustices of past and present, and to find common ground to address them. This is the genius of a democracy. This is the genius of a

people seeking a “more perfect union.” This is the genius of America.

Our national blessings do not come without responsibilities. We have a civic vocation to participate in public life, regardless of our personal political views. The Church has its own moral and ethical ground, but we recognize the civil rights of others to disagree with us. Grateful for the religious freedom guaranteed by the Bill of Rights, we must make our case in a spirit of love and acceptance of others, even those whose opinions – minority or majority – strike us as wrong. There must be the same rights for all Americans, or there is no safety of rights for any American.

Beloved Faithful, we are so very blessed to live in this ‘land of the free and home of the brave,’ which has been defended by the sacrifice of so many. We Orthodox Christians are relatively few in America, but we should have an outsize influence – for justice, for equality – to speak for the voiceless and advocate the downtrodden. This is our way of giving back and of giving thanks. Together, let us help to make of our Nation a place that does, indeed, praise the Lord in word and deed. Thus, all citizens shall be happy and blessed; for, as it says in the Psalms: “Blessed are the people who know jubilation” (Psalm 88:15, LXX).

A happy Fourth of July to all!

With paternal love in Christ Jesus,

† ELPIDOPHOROS

Archbishop of America

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