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Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America – Archepiscopal Encyclical on the Fourth of July – 2022



Prot. No. 153/2022

Archepiscopal Encyclical on the Fourth of July

July 3, 2022

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 Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

(John 8:32)

This Fourth of July — which we celebrate tomorrow — is a most extraordinary day for the Greek Orthodox Church of America. We are saluting the Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave, as well as the extraordinary milestones in the history of our National Church. We shall celebrate the consecration of the Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and National Shrine at the World Trade Center, even as we mark the centennial of the establishment of our Sacred Archdiocese — the first and preeminent Eparchy of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in the Diaspora.

One of the reasons that we have chosen the Fourth of July for the consecration is to bring into focus the truth that the rebuilding of Saint Nicholas as a Shrine for the Nation is also an act of restoration. For the essence of what it means to be an American is enshrined in the First Amendment of our Bill of Rights — that is, our freedom to believe as our conscience dictates. Our country was attacked on 9/11

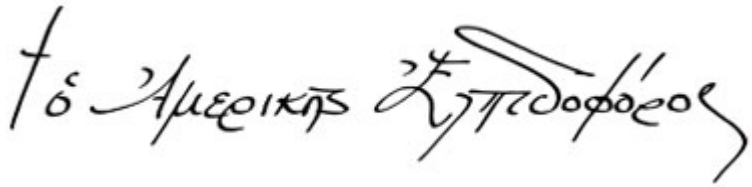
as an act of hatred fueled by religious bigotry. And the only response that bears witness to our own faith and to what it means to be an American is to rebuild. To rebuild as both the original Greek Orthodox Church, but also as a space where a diversity of beliefs and respect for other faith traditions can be celebrated, taught and enshrined for all people.

Our freedom in Christ — Who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life — brings honesty to this enterprise of spiritual restoration. For it is the Lord Himself who establishes us in freedom, more than any human convention. Freedom is ultimately within our souls and mind, our hearts and our conscience. And as Greek Orthodox Americans, we celebrate the liberty to believe in accordance with our tradition, especially in our centennial year.

And so, let us take the powerful symbol of our National Shrine, together with the pivotal moment of our Archdiocesan centennial, and chart a new vision for the future — one that will honor the past, bind us to one another, and plant our ensign of the Cross squarely in our greater society. In this spirit, we can share the truth with all people, and give the gift of ultimate freedom in our Lord Jesus Christ to all the world.

A very blessed and happy Fourth of July to all!

With paternal blessings and love in Christ,



† ELPIDOPHOROS

Archbishop of America

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