14/09/2022

Archepiscopal Encyclical on the Feast of the Universal Exaltation of the Precious and Life-giving Cross



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:

Κἀγὼ ἐὰν ὑψωθῶ ἐκ τῆς γῆς, πάντας ἑλκύσω πρὸς ἐμαυτόν. (κατὰ Ἰωάννην 12:32)

And I, if I be exalted from the earth, I shall draw all people to myself. (John 12:23)

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The Sacred Feastday, which reminds every parishioner from coast to coast of our beloved Hellenic College and Holy Cross School of Theology, speaks to the love of God for every human being. But it also speaks of our service to the Holy Cross by

being Σταυροφόροι – those who bear the Cross. And how do we do carry His Cross? First, by picking up our own and carrying it with all the love and compassion we can muster for ourselves and for those around us.

To elevate, to exalt, to raise the Cross as did the saintly Archbishop Makarios on that first September Fourteenth in Jerusalem so many centuries ago, is to exalt the One Who died upon it in order to redeem our lives. Our Lord Jesus Christ willingly ascended the Cross to die for us, as we chant in the Kontakion of the Feast: Ὁ ὑψωθεὶς ἐν τῷ Σταυρῷ ἑκουσίως. The question for us, then, is what are we willing to do?

Are we willing to sacrifice, to give of ourselves generously, to show compassion, mercy and forgiveness? This is what the Lord did on the Cross, the Cross to which He was nailed by the hands of every human being who has ever lived or will live. His mercy and grace creates a spiritual vortex of love that draws all people into its whirling effulgence, which is the nature, the mission, and the glory of the Church.

My dear brethren in Christ: we could have no better name and purpose for our beloved Σχολή, for it is to this magnetic and powerful grace that our future clergy are called. Their vocation is nothing less than to continually raise up the Cross of Christ, as Saint Paul says: But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world (Galatians 6:14). Therefore, let us exalt the Cross of Christ in our lives, and lift up our School – with prayers, support, and above all, committed students, who will carry the Cross on high and bring glory to our Lord and God.

With paternal blessings and love in Christ,

† ELPIDOPHOROS

Archbishop of America

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