

Archbishop Elpidophoros, Remarks at the Doxology for the Greek Independence Parade, Philadelphia



Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

Today is a wondrous coming-together of our Community, to celebrate the glories of March 25th – both spiritual and secular. In fact, since March 25th is the Feast of the Incarnation of God into our world, the spiritual and the secular are joined together in ways marvelous to behold!

Today is also the last Sunday of the Holy Lent, in which we celebrate the redemption of the flesh by the spirit, in the person of Saint Mary of Egypt. The coincidence of our March 25th observances with this particular Sunday demonstrate that for us, the Greek Orthodox People, we do not divorce our spiritual principles from our everyday lives. We live in this world, and at the same time, we are not of this world. Instead, we seek to transform the world – to bring it a little closer every day to the Kingdom of Heaven.

And that is what our celebration of Greek Independence Day is ultimately about – recognizing the Re-Birth of Hellas as a spiritual, as well as a secular, history of

redemption.

The Heroes of 1821 were fighting for much more than political freedom. They were fighting for the soul of Greece, the legacy of Greece, and indeed, for their Greek Orthodox identity.

During the more than four hundred years of Ottoman occupation, it is a true miracle of God that we did not lose our Faith. We did not lose our culture. We did not lose our language. We did not lose our identity.

I am not saying that there were not compromises, because when your very survival is at stake, you must have a degree of flexibility. The tree that bends in the storm is the one that is still standing when the storm passes.

Nevertheless, the fact that the Omogeneia is gathered here – in the epicenter of the American Revolution – to extol the Greek Revolution, says so very much about our success.

We will be marching through this city to proclaim, proudly and peaceably, that the struggle of our spiritual and physical ancestors ended in victory.

Our Doxology give thanks and praise to God, and to His Holy Mother for the happy outcome, and it also blesses the memory of all those who made this outcome possible.

Greeks have come to America from more than just the shores of our ancient homeland – the very soil from which we gifted to the world the likes of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. We converged from the farthest reaches of the Diaspora, and brought the best and the brightest of our kind to build a remarkable community here in the United States.

And we brought the witness of our proud legacy – how the Greeks taught the world to observe its own workings, and how to live together as a πολιτεία – a web of citizens woven together by a common good. We call this Democracy, and together with the gift of authentic and historical Christianity, they are the greatest gifts we could share.

Thus, March 25th is a union of the spiritual and the material in many ways – chiefly the union of God with humanity in the womb of the Virgin.

But in the courage and vision of the Heroes of 1821, it is also the union of self-determination – the essence of democratic institutions, with the freedom of conscience – the essence of true religious faith. We added to the πολιτεία the truth

of the Ἐκκλησία, and thus we united the very best of Greece with the very best of Orthodoxy – the union of body and soul, of matter and spirit.

My Sisters and Brothers:

We are Greek and we are Orthodox. And this is true whether your ethnicity issues from Greece or not. For as the Philosopher Isocrates said, immortalized in stone as the inscription above the entrance to the world-famous Gennadius Library in Athens:

Ἕλληνας καλοῦνται οἱ τῆς παιδείας τῆς ἡμετέρας μετέχοντες.

Those who partake of our culture are called “Greeks.”

Therefore, let us celebrate today with the pride, the joy, and the gratitude that is owed to this Day. Let us march to manifest our faith, our culture, our philosophy, our language, our art, and so much more.

And let us give thanks to God and to His Holy Mother in our Doxology today – thanks for our freedom in Christ, and the liberty we enjoy in the lands of our ancestors and those where we dwell this day.

Ζήτω ἡ Ἑλλάς!

Ζήτω τὸ Ἑλληνικὸ Ἔθνος!

Ζήτω τὸ Εἰκοσιένα!

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