



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

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Archiepiscopal Encyclical on the Fourth of July

July 4th, 2023

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 Lord,

... οὗ δὲ τὸ Πνεῦμα Κυρίου, ἐκεῖ ἐλευθερία. (Πρὸς Κορινθίους Β 3:17)
... and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. (II Corinthians 3:17)

The Fourth of July is a National Holiday for all Americans, no matter how or when their ancestors came to this land. Whether millennia ago, across the Bering Straits, or in ships of conquest, or ships of slavery, or even just a few weeks ago after a dangerous and arduous trek. The fact is that we are all Americans — worthy of our fellow citizens' esteem and respect. In a time when our political discourse has deteriorated, and we hear more and more hateful rhetoric, it seems good and just to remember that this is the "Land of the Free." And such freedom comes as a gift, and as a responsibility.

The Apostle Paul reminds us that our ultimate freedom is of God, and of the interior freedom that consciousness of the Spirit imbues within the human person. The basis of that freedom is love; for to love is to liberate your heart, soul, and mind from the bonds of hatred, prejudice, and envy. Being truly free requires the courage to shoulder the responsibilities of liberty. That is why our country is also called the "Home of the Brave."



Not everyone takes up arms to defend our land, but everyone can take up the cause. Freedom is not guaranteed by weapons, no matter how sophisticated. Freedom is the vocation of every citizen, who values the rights and liberties of their fellow citizens. For in our democratic republic, how we treat the least of our brethren will determine the destiny of all.

Therefore, let us celebrate two hundred and forty-seven years of American Independence. We continue to forge a more perfect union, so that all Americans may enjoy the blessings of their life, their liberty, and the pursuit of their happiness. As Orthodox Christians, let us be grateful for the freedoms we enjoy, and in the Spirit of the Lord, commit ourselves to ensure that all our fellow citizens can partake of the goodness of this Land of the Free and Home of the Brave.

A very blessed and happy Fourth of July to all!

With paternal love in Christ,

† ELPIDOPHOROS
Archbishop of America