

NEEDLESS REPETITION OR A NEEDFUL REQUEST

Anyone who has ever attended a service in the Orthodox Church knows our most repeated prayer: LORD HAVE MERCY! It is a singular response to some petitions. At other times, it may be sung or chanted three, twelve, forty or even one hundred times. We hear these three words so much that the question is often raised: Is it really necessary to repeat this plea over and over?

To give the proper answer to this question, we must carefully examine what we are actually asking for with this humble prayer. True, we are petitioning God to overlook our faults and sinfulness and be merciful to us. Seeking forgiveness (or mercy) from our Heavenly Father must always be in our hearts and on our lips. Yet constantly praying LORD HAVE MERCY

means much more than that. Some translations of Sacred Scripture do not exclusively use the word MERCY for the Hebrew term HESED. It is also translated as: compassion, gracious, generous and, yes, LOVING. In essence, then, when we pray LORD HAVE MERCY, we are asking Him to shower us with His love and His goodness. We are requesting His care and His guidance. We are praying that He will bestow upon us all of the things that are necessary for our salvation.

A constant prayer of LORD HAVE MERCY must encompass our entire being. It is not a WASTE OF BREATH. On the contrary, it is a beautiful way of reminding ourselves of how dependent we are on our Creator, and that EVERY GOOD AND PERFECT GIFT IS FROM ABOVE.

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**St. Sophia/SS. Faith, Hope & Agape
Greek Orthodox Church of Valley Forge**

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Sunday Worship: 8:45 am - Orthros: 10:00 am Divine Liturgy
Office Hours - 10 am to 4 pm

Rev. Fr. Symeon Williams
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Metropolis of New Jersey



July 6, 2025
4th Sunday of Matthew
Righteous Sisoos the Great
Holy Apostles Archippus, Philemon and Onesimus
Loukia the Virgin-martyr, Rixios and the 24 Companion Martyrs



ENTRANCE HYMNS

Resurrectional Apolytikion – Effrenestho ta Ourania (“Let the Heavens Above Rejoice”)

Let the heavens above rejoice, and all those here on the earth, on the earth, be glad. A mighty feat of strength has been wrought by the arm of the Lord. O Death has he trampled down with his own death. First-born among the dead has He become, from the womb of Hades has He delivered us and has granted to the world His Great Mercy.

Apolytikion of St. Sophia/Ss. Faith, Hope & Agape

Greek

Ὁς ελαία κατά καρπος ανεβλάστησας, ἐν ταῖς ἀνλαῖς τοῦ Κυρίου, Σοφία μάρτυς σεμνή, καί προσήγαγες Χριστῷ καρπὸν ἠδύτατον, τοὺς τῆς νηδύος σου βλαστούς, δι’ ἀγώνων εὐαγῶν, Ἀγάπην τε καὶ Ἐλπίδα σὺν τῇ θεόφρονι Πίστει, μεθῶν δυσώπει υπέρ πάντων ἡμῶν.

English Phonetics for Greek

Os elea kata karpos anevlastisas, en tes avles tu Kyriou Sofia martyrs semni, ke prosigages Christo karpon idytaton, tus tis nidyos su vlastus, di’ agonon evagon, Agapin te ke Elpida, syn ti theofroni Pisti; meth’ on dysopi yper pandon imon.

English

As an olive tree laden with fruit you sprouted forth, in the courtyards of the Lord, Sophia martyr dignified, and you brought to Christ a fruit most sweet, Namely your womb’s own sprouts, brought up by instructive deeds: your daughters Love and Hope, along with God-minded Faith; together intercede with God for us all.

Seasonal Kontakion – Prostasia ton Christianon (“O unfailing protection of Christians”)

O unfailing protection of Christians, and our faithful advocate before the Creator: though we are sinners, do not ignore our entreaty; but in your goodness, grant your timely help to us who appeal to you in faith. Quickly make intercession; on our behalf make speedy supplication, O Theotokos, for you always protect those who honor you.

PRAYER MINISTRY



"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:6-7

"And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing you will receive." Matthew 21:22

"For with God, nothing will be impossible." Luke 1:37

Clearly, there is nothing more powerful than the power of prayer. Imagine someone struggling or suffering and then having multiple people praying for them daily! Our "Prayer Warriors" do just that. They will pray for individuals added to the list daily.

If you know of someone in need, you can add them to our prayer list using one of the following methods:

1. Fill out a request form at the box found in the church narthex **OR**
2. Send an email to Prayers@SaintSophiaChurch.org **OR**
3. Use the anonymous online form (the link is found under Prayer Ministry on our website), or you can use this link <https://forms.office.com/r/LZAHY16LSZ> **OR**
4. Use the QR form below (also found on the box in the narthex) which takes you to the anonymous form.





Facing the needs of our neighbors, together.

FOCUS North America exists to serve the poor by bringing together Orthodox Christian churches and community partners to provide Food, Occupation, Clothing, Understanding, Shelter, and other assistance to address the needs of local communities.

FOCUS Philadelphia – based out of Saint Sophia and led by John Pogas as Center Director – is committed to understanding and addressing the needs of our neighbors. As Christ said, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of my brothers and sisters, you did for me” - Matthew 25:40

We serve hot meals in

- Norristown every Wednesday evening at 7:00 PM
- Philadelphia every Thursday evening at 8:00 PM

Discover how you can support this vital ministry either by volunteering, donating food, funding or simply spreading the word. Visit www.focusphiladelphia.org to learn more or use our SignUpGenius (link below).



Link to SignUpGenius

Epistle Reading

The reading is from St. Paul's Letter to the Romans 6:18-23

*Sing praises to our God, sing praises.
Verse: Clap your hands, all you nations.*

Brethren, having been set free from sin, you have become slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once yielded your members to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, so now yield your members to righteousness for sanctification.

When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. But then what return did you get from the things of which you are now ashamed? The end of those things is death. But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the return you get is sanctification and its end, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Ἀνάγνωσις ἐπιστολῆς Πρὸς Ῥωμαίους 6:18-23 τὸ ἀνάγνωσμα

*Ψάλατε τῷ Θεῷ ἡμῶν, ψάλατε.
Στίχ. Πάντα τὰ ἔθνη κροτήσατε χεῖρας.*

Ἀδελφοί, ἐλευθερωθέντες δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς ἀμαρτίας, ἐδουλώθητε τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ. Ἀνθρώπινον λέγω διὰ τὴν ἀσθένειαν τῆς σαρκὸς ὑμῶν· ὥσπερ γὰρ παρεστήσατε τὰ μέλη ὑμῶν δοῦλα τῇ ἀκαθαρσίᾳ καὶ τῇ ἀνομίᾳ εἰς τὴν ἀνομίαν, οὕτως νῦν παραστήσατε τὰ μέλη ὑμῶν δοῦλα τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ εἰς ἁγιασμόν. Ὅτε γὰρ δοῦλοι ἦτε τῆς ἀμαρτίας, ἐλεύθεροι ἦτε τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ. Τίνα οὖν καρπὸν εἶχετε τότε ἐφ' οἷς νῦν ἐπαισχύνεσθε; Τὸ γὰρ τέλος ἐκείνων θάνατος. Νυνὶ δὲ ἐλευθερωθέντες ἀπὸ τῆς ἀμαρτίας, δουλωθέντες δὲ τῷ θεῷ, ἔχετε τὸν καρπὸν ὑμῶν εἰς ἁγιασμόν, τὸ δὲ τέλος ζωὴν αἰώνιον. Τὰ γὰρ ὀψώνια τῆς ἀμαρτίας θάνατος, τὸ δὲ χάρισμα τοῦ θεοῦ ζωὴ αἰώνιος ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τῷ κυρίῳ ἡμῶν.

GOSPEL READING

The Gospel According to Matthew 8:5-13

At that time, as Jesus entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to him, beseeching him and saying, "Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, in terrible distress." And he said to him, "I will come and heal him." But the centurion answered him, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; but only say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this,' and he does it." When Jesus heard him, he marveled, and said to those who followed him, "Truly, I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such faith. I tell you, many will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth." And to the centurion Jesus said, "Go; be it done for you as you have believed." And the servant was healed at that very moment.

ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΝ

Ἐκ τοῦ Κατὰ Ματθαῖον 8:5-13 Εὐαγγελίου τὸ Ἀνάγνωσμα

Τῷ καιρῷ ἐκείνῳ, εἰσελθόντι δὲ αὐτῷ εἰς Καπερναοῦμ προσῆλθεν αὐτῷ ἑκατόνταρχος παρακαλῶν αὐτὸν καὶ λέγων· Κύριε, ὁ παῖς μου βέβληται ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ παραλυτικός, δεινῶς βασανιζόμενος. καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς· ἐγὼ ἐλθὼν θεραπεύσω αὐτόν. καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ ἑκατόνταρχος ἔφη· Κύριε, οὐκ εἰμι ἰκανὸς ἵνα μου ὑπὸ τὴν στέγην εἰσέλθῃς· ἀλλὰ μόνον εἰπέ λόγῳ, καὶ ἰαθήσεται ὁ παῖς μου. καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼ ἄνθρωπός εἰμι ὑπὸ ἐξουσίαν, ἔχων ὑπ' ἐμαυτὸν στρατιώτας, καὶ λέγω τούτῳ, πορεύθητι, καὶ πορεύεται, καὶ ἄλλῳ, ἔρχου, καὶ ἔρχεται, καὶ τῷ δούλῳ μου, ποιήσον τοῦτο, καὶ ποιεῖ. ἀκούσας δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐθαύμασε καὶ εἶπε τοῖς ἀκολουθοῦσιν· ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, οὐδὲ ἐν τῷ Ἰσραὴλ τοσαύτην πίστιν εὔρον. λέγω δὲ ὑμῖν ὅτι πολλοὶ ἄπο ἀνατολῶν καὶ δυσμῶν ἤξουσι καὶ ἀνακλιθήσονται μετὰ Ἀβραάμ καὶ Ἰσαὰκ καὶ Ἰακώβ ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τῶν οὐρανῶν, οἱ δὲ υἱοὶ τῆς βασιλείας ἐκβληθήσονται εἰς τὸ σκότος τὸ ἐξώτερον· ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων. καὶ εἶπεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς τῷ ἑκατοντάρχῳ· ὕπαγε, καὶ ὡς ἐπίστευσας γεννηθήτω σοι. καὶ ἰάθη ὁ παῖς αὐτοῦ ἐν τῇ ὥρᾳ ἐκείνῃ.

SCHEDULE OF UPCOMING SERVICES AND EVENTS

Sun. July 6 th	8:45 am	Orthros; 10:00 am Divine Liturgy 4 th Sunday of Matthew
Fri. July 11 th	6:30 pm	Adult Catechism (led by Fr. Symeon) – in the church hall
Sat. July 12	5:00 pm	Vespers
Sun. July 13 th	8:45 am	Orthros; 10:00 am Divine Liturgy Sunday of the Holy Fathers of the 4 th Ecumenical Council
Fri. July 18 th	6:30 pm	Adult Catechism (led by Fr. Symeon) – in the church hall
Sun. July 20 th	8:45 am	Orthros; 10:00 am Divine Liturgy 6 th Sunday of Matthew; The Glorious Prophet Elias
Sun. July 27 th	8:45 am	Orthros; 10:00 am Divine Liturgy 7 th Sunday of Matthew
Fri. Aug. 1 st	6:00 pm	Small Paraklesis to the Theotokos
	7:00 pm	Catechism & Potluck (in the church hall)
Sun. Aug. 3 rd	8:45 am	Orthros; 10:00 am Divine Liturgy 8 th Sunday of Matthew
Mon. Aug. 4 th	6:30 pm	Small Paraklesis to the Theotokos
Tues. Aug. 5 th	6:30 pm	Vespers for Holy Transfiguration
Wed. Aug. 6 th	8:45 am	Orthros; 10:00 am Divine Liturgy Holy Transfiguration of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ
Thurs. Aug. 7 th	6:30 pm	Small Paraklesis to the Theotokos
Fri. Aug. 8 th	6:00 pm	Small Paraklesis to the Theotokos
	7:00 pm	Catechism & Potluck (in the church hall)
Sun. Aug. 10 th	8:45 am	Orthros; 10:00 am Divine Liturgy 9 th Sunday of Matthew
Mon. Aug. 11 th	6:30 pm	Small Paraklesis to the Theotokos
Tues. Aug. 12 th	6:30 pm	Small Paraklesis to the Theotokos
Wed. Aug. 13 th	6:30 pm	Small Paraklesis to the Theotokos
Thurs. Aug. 14 th	4:30 pm	Decoration of the Kouvouklion – As is our tradition, we will decorate the kouvouklion with flowers for Great Vespers and the Divine Liturgy for the Falling Asleep (Dormition) of the Theotokos. Everyone is welcome to bring flowers from their gardens and to stay and help decorate the kouvouklion.
	6:30 pm	Great Vespers & Artoklasia – Dormition of the Theotokos
Fri. Aug. 15 th	8:45 am	Orthros; 10:00 am Divine Liturgy Dormition of the Theotokos

WANTED! Coffee Hour Sponsors: Thank you to everyone who has sponsored coffee hour recently. **We currently need coffee hour sponsors for the next several weeks.** If you are interested in sponsoring a coffee hour, please sign up on the Coffee Hour Sponsor Sheet on the window at the back of the hall near the coffee/refreshments table. **The sponsor is responsible for bringing the food, but the church will supply the coffee, creamer, juice, and paper products to eliminate waste and clutter. We ask that the sponsors donate \$25 (made payable to St. Sophia Church) to offset these expenses.** Thank you!

July 6, 2025
4th Sunday of Matthew
Righteous Sisoos the Great
Holy Apostles Archippus, Philemon and Onesimus
Loukia the Virgin-martyr, Rixios and the 24 Companion Martyrs



St. Sophia/Ss Faith, Hope & Agape Vigil Candle: If you are interested in sponsoring a vigil candle, please see a Parish Council member at the Pangari – no advance signup necessary and several individuals or families can sponsor each week. The proceeds of these donations will go to our Mortgage Reduction Fund. Each vigil candle lasts one week; the asking donation is \$10.

Standing versus kneeling on Sundays: Each Sunday is a joyful celebration of Pascha – of Christ's victory over death and sin. We experience the Resurrection from Pascha until Pentecost by standing in prayer during all liturgies and do not kneel; kneeling and prostrations are demonstrations of repentance. As every Sunday is a "little Pascha", we are reminded that the Church teaches us to remain standing on Sundays during the invocation (Ἡ Ἐπίκλησις) of the Holy Spirit (the Consecration of the Body and Blood of our Lord). In contrast, during weekday services throughout the year it is customary to kneel during the Consecration. ***In lieu of kneeling on Sundays, please bow your heads reverently and pray along with the choir.***

Coffee Hour: Thank you to Vasili & Sofia Tatsis for offering today's coffee hour.

Mortgage Reduction Campaign: As of July 1, 2025, our mortgage balance is **\$272,543.63**. Thank you to our Stewards and friends who participated this month, and please help us continue to reduce the mortgage to \$0 in the near future.

Live streaming of Services: Liturgical services are now live streamed on **YouTube**. You DO NOT need a **YouTube** account to access the on-line services, nor do you need to subscribe. Simply click on the following link: <http://www.youtube.com/@stsophiaVF>.



Senior Citizen Ministry: St. Sophia's Senior Parea is open to all senior citizens of the community. The meetings take place on Thursdays from 10:00 am to 12 noon.

THE NICENE CREED
(The Confession of Faith)

I believe in one God, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages;

Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten, not created, of one essence with the Father, through Whom all things were made.

Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man.

He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried;

And He rose on the third day, according to the Scriptures.

He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father;

And He will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead; His kingdom shall have no end.

And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Creator of Life, Who proceeds from the Father, Who together with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, Who spoke through the prophets.

In one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.
I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

I look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the age to come.

Amen

Communion Prayers

I believe and confess, Lord, that You are truly the Christ, the Son of the living God, Who came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the first. I also believe that this is truly Your pure Body and that this is truly Your precious Blood. Therefore, I pray to You, have mercy upon me, and forgive my transgressions, voluntary and involuntary, in word and deed, in knowledge or in ignorance. And make me worthy, without condemnation, to partake of Your pure Mysteries for the remission of sins and for eternal life. Amen.

Behold, I approach for Divine Communion. O Maker, burn me not as I partake, For You are fire consuming the unworthy. But cleanse me from every stain.

O Son of God, receive me today as a partaker of Your mystical supper. For I will not speak of the mystery to Your enemies, nor will I give You a kiss, as did Judas. But like the thief, I confess to You: Remember me, Lord, in Your Kingdom.

Tremble, O man, as you behold the divine Blood. It is a burning coal that sears the unworthy. The Body of God both deifies and nourishes me: It deifies the Spirit and wondrously nourishes the mind.

You have smitten me with yearning, O Christ, and by Your divine eros You have changed me. But burn up with spiritual fire my sins, and grant me to be filled with delight in You, so that, leaping for joy, I may magnify, O Good One, Your two comings.

How shall I, who am unworthy, enter into the splendor of Your saints? If I should dare to enter into the bridal chamber, my vesture will condemn me, since it is not a wedding garment; and being bound up, I shall be cast out by the angels. Cleanse, O Lord, the filth of my soul, and save me, as You are the one Who loves mankind. In Your love, Lord, cleanse my soul, and save me.

Master Who loves mankind, Lord Jesus Christ, my God, let not these Holy Gifts be to my judgment because I am unworthy, but rather for the purification and sanctification of both soul and body and the pledge of the life and Kingdom to come. It is good for me to cleave unto God and to place in Him the hope of my salvation.

O Son of God, receive me today as a partaker of Your mystical supper. For I will not speak of the mystery to Your enemies, nor will I give You a kiss, as did Judas. But like the thief, I confess to You: Remember me, Lord, in Your Kingdom.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

ENGLISH

Our Father, who art in heaven;
hallowed be Thy name, Thy
Kingdom come, Thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses, as
we forgive those who trespass
against us; and lead us not into
temptation, but deliver us from
evil.

ENGLISH PHONETICS

Pá-ter i-món o en tis ou-ra-nís
a-gi-as-thí-to to o-no-má Sou,
el-thé-to I va-si-lí-a Sou,
ge-ni-thí-to to thé-li-má Sou, os
en ou-ra-nó ke e-pi tis ghis.

Ton ár-ton i-món ton
e-pi-ou-si-on dos i-mín
sí-me-ron ke á-fes i-mín ta
o-fe-lí-ma-ta i-món, os ke i-mís
a-fí-e-men tis o-fí-lé-tes i-món ke
mi i-se-nég-kis i-más is
pi-ras-món, al-la rí-se i-más a-pó
tou po-ni-roú.

GREEK

Πάτερ ἡμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς
ἀγιασθήτω τό ὄνομά σου,
ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου,
γενηθήτω τό θέλημά σου, ὡς
ἐν οὐρανῷ καί ἐπί τῆς γῆς.

Τόν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τόν
ἐπιούσιον δός ἡμῖν
σήμερον καί ἄφες ἡμῖν τά
ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν, ὡς καί ἡμεῖς
ἀφίεμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν καί
μή εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς
πειρασμόν, ἀλλά ῥύσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπό
τοῦ πονηροῦ.

Phonetics by Dr. Christine Kerxhali,
orthodoxtoday.wordpress.com

καταγωγής. Όμως η αληθινή ελευθερία, που είναι άπροσωπώληπτη, μπορεί να προέλθει μονάχα από το Θεό και να ριζώσει μέσα στο βάθος της καρδιάς μας.

Ο Κύριός μας Ιησούς Χριστός είπε στους μαθητές του ότι η αλήθεια θα τους ελευθερώσει. Αλλά σε έναν κόσμο όπου η αλήθεια συχνά μοιάζει θολή, έρχεται στο νου μας η ερώτηση του ανθρώπου που παρέδωσε το Χριστό στο σταυρικό θάνατο: «Τί έστιν αλήθεια»; Μπορούμε να γνωρίσουμε την αλήθεια, μόνο αν παραμείνουμε ένωμένοι με το Λόγο, αυτόν που ανέβηκε στο σταυρό με ίδια θέληση, για να μās σώσει.

Έπομένως, ελευθερία και αλήθεια είναι δεμένες μεταξύ τους στο πρόσωπο του Χριστού. Εάν δεν είμαστε αληθινοί άνθρωποι, δηλαδή εάν δεν ανήκουμε στην αλήθεια, όπως είπε ο Κύριος στον Πιλάτο (Ιω. 18, 37), τότε ό,τι βλέπουμε και αντιλαμβανόμαστε θα παραμείνει δεμένο με την ύποκειμενική μας γνώμη ή με την άκριτη αποδοχή όσων λένε οί άλλοι, και όχι με το Λόγο του Θεού. Αυτό δεν ταιριάζει στο φρόνημα και τη ζωή που προτείνει η Ορθόδοξη Έκκλησία και το Ευαγγέλιο του Χριστού.

Ενώ το Αμερικανικό Έθνος μας γιορτάζει σήμερα την ημέρα της γεννήσεώς του, τη στιγμή που ο κόσμος αναζητεί άπεγνωσμένα την αλήθεια και την ειρήνη, τα όποια αποτελούν και τα σταθερά σημεία μιάς ζωής μέσα στο φώς του Χριστού, άς αποφασίσουμε να γίνουμε αληθινοί μαθητές του. Ο Κύριος γνωρίζει τη δίψα μας για ελευθερία και γνώση, αλλά τα δώρα αυτά τα προσφέρει ανάλογα με την πίστη μας και τα καλά έργα που κάνουμε ως ύπηρέτες του. Άς προσπαθήσουμε, λοιπόν, να είμαστε τίμιοι και πιστοί μαθητές του Λόγου, για να μπορέσουμε να γνωρίσουμε την αλήθεια και να ζήσουμε όντως ελεύθεροι!

Μετά πολλής πατρικής έν Χριστώ αγάπης,

+ό Αμερικής Έλπιδοφόρος



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA
ARCHEPISCOPAL ENCYCLICAL

Prot. No. 268/2025

Archepiscopal Encyclical on the Fourth of July

July 4, 2025

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 Sacred Archdiocese of America:

Έάν ύμεις μείνητε έν τώ λόγω τώ έμώ, αληθώς μαθηταί μου έστε, και γνώσεσθε την αλήθειαν, και ή αλήθεια ελευθερώσει ύμās. (κατά Ιωάννην 8:31-32)

If you abide in My Message, then you are truly My followers, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. (John 8:31-32)

My beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord,

The Fourth of July is much more than the American celebration of liberty. It is the memory of that moment of the turning of the tide, when a people who were abused by the powerful chose to stand up for themselves and grasp for the freedom that their conscience told them was their “unalienable right.” And this is the very same liberty that we constantly strive to preserve and ensure in this blessed American land for the liberties of all people, regardless of their race, ethnicity, religion, or national origin. However, a true freedom that is equal for every human being can only come from God, in the inner person.

The Lord Jesus Christ told His disciples that the truth would set them free. But in a world where the truth oftentimes appears to be obscured, we find ourselves frequently asking the same question as the man who ordered the crucifixion of our Lord did two millennia ago, "What is truth?" If we are able to *know* the truth of things, then we must also recognize that the condition for that knowledge is abiding in the Logos — the Message of the One Who ascended the Cross of His own free will for our salvation.

Therefore, freedom and truth are inextricably linked in the person of our Savior. If we are not truthful people — or in other words, if we are not *of* the truth, as the Lord answered Pontius Pilate (John 18:37) — then our perception will always be shackled to our own personal opinions or our willingness to blindly follow the views of others and not the Logos of the Word of God. And this, my dear friends, is contrary to the ethos and authentic perspective of the Orthodox Church and the Gospel.

On our Nation's Birthday, then, when the entire world and our Country yearn for truth and peace — the firm and unyielding hallmarks of a genuine life in Christ — let us commit to truly being Christ's followers. The Lord understands our need for freedom and knowledge, but He bestows them upon us in proportion to the measure of our faithfulness and the good deeds that we perform as His servants. Let us, therefore, strive to be honest disciples of His Divine Word, so that we may "know the truth" (John 8:32) and be truly free!

With much paternal love in Christ,



+ ELPIDOPHOROS
Archbishop of America



ΙΕΡΑ ΑΡΧΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΗ ΑΜΕΡΙΚΗΣ
ΑΡΧΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΙΚΗ ΕΓΚΥΚΛΙΟΣ

Αριθμ. Πρωτ.: 268/2025

Αρχιεπισκοπική Έγκύκλιος για την Τετάρτη Ιουλίου.

4^η Ιουλίου 2025

Πρὸς τοὺς Σεβασμιωτάτους καὶ Θεοφιλεστάτους Ἀρχιερεῖς, τοὺς Ἐυλαβεστάτους Ἱερεῖς καὶ Διακόνους, τὶς Πρεσβυτέρες καὶ τὶς Διακόνισσες, τοὺς Μοναχοὺς καὶ τὶς Μοναχές, τοὺς Προέδρους καὶ τὰ Μέλη τῶν Κοινωνικῶν Συμβουλίων, τοὺς Ἐντιμολογιατάτους Ἀρχόντες τοῦ Οἰκουμενικοῦ Πατριαρχείου, τὰ μέλη τῆς Ἡγεσίας τῶν 100, τὰ Ἡμερήσια καὶ Απογευματινὰ Σχολεῖα, τὶς Φιλοπτώχους Ἀδελφότητες, τὴ Νεολαία, τὶς Ἑλληνορθόδοξες Ὄργανώσεις καὶ ὁλόκληρο τὸ Χριστεπάνυμο πλήρωμα τῆς Ἱερᾶς Αρχιεπισκοπῆς Ἀμερικῆς.

«Ἐὰν ὑμεῖς μείνητε ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τῷ ἐμῷ, ἀληθῶς μαθηταὶ μου ἔστε καὶ γνώσεσθε τὴν ἀλήθειαν καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια ἐλευθερώσει ὑμᾶς» (Κατὰ Ἰωάννην 8: 31-32).

Προσφιλεῖς ἀδελφοὶ καὶ ἀδελφές ἐν Χριστῷ,

Ἡ Τετάρτη Ἰουλίου εἶναι κάτι περισσότερο ἀπὸ μία ἑορτὴ τῆς ἐλευθερίας στὴν Ἀμερική. Εἶναι ἡ ἱστορικὴ μνήμη ἐκείνης τῆς στιγμῆς, ὅταν ἓνας καταπιεσμένος λαὸς ἀποφασίζει νὰ ξεσηκωθεῖ καὶ νὰ διεκδικήσει τὴν ἐλευθερία του, ὅπως ἡ συνείδησή του καταδεικνύει, ὡς «ἀναφαίρετο δικαίωμα». Καὶ αὐτὴ ἡ ἐλευθερία εἶναι κάτι ποὺ προσπαθοῦμε νὰ κρατήσουμε ζωντανὸ καὶ ἐμπρακτο σὲ αὐτὴ τὴν εὐλογημένη χώρα, γιὰ ὅλους τοὺς ἀνθρώπους, ἀνεξαρτήτως φυλῆς, ἐθνικότητας, θρησκείας ἢ