

THE GREEK ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL
OF THE ANNUNCIATION

BALTIMORE, MD 21201

Sunday, July 2, 2023

4TH SUNDAY OF MATTHEW



Rev. Fr. Anastasios P. Bourantas

Protopresbyter Presiding Priest

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Rev. Fr. Dn. John Bullock

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Cathedral Office

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TODAY

Memorial Service - May His Memory Be Eternal

Alex Prevas - 7 years

- **The servant of God, Chelsea 'Anastasia' Green** will be chrismated in the Orthodox Church this morning. Her sponsors are Harry and Reina Amanatides. May God grant her many blessed years!
- **We thank our 2023 Stewardship Day Sponsors**, Maria Brown, for selecting July 1st in honor of the Feast Day of Saints Cosmas and Damien and Jean, Steve and Katherine Prevas for selecting July 2nd in memory of Alexander Prevas on the occasion of his birthday.
- **Please join us for a Coffee Hour in the AHEPA room**, sponsored in memory of Alexander Prevas' birthday by his family, Jean, Steve and Katherine Prevas.
- **If you are visiting the Cathedral**, please introduce yourself to Father Anastasios Bourantas at the end of the Liturgy.



- Our Cathedral community will be blessed with a visit by **His Grace Bishop Constantine of Sassima on Sunday, July 9** for Orthros and Hierarchical Divine Liturgy.
- A reception hosted by AHEPA, will be held at the AOC following services. Plan on joining us!

**TODAY WE CELEBRATE THE PLACING OF THE
PRECIOUS ROBE OF THE THEOTOKOS IN
BLACHERNAE.**

During the reign of Leo the Great (457-474) two patricians and brethren on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land lodged with an old widow, a Christian of Jewish descent. Seeing the many miracles wrought at a small shrine in her house, they pressed her until she revealed to them that she had raiment of the most holy Theotokos kept in a small coffer. Our Lady had had two virgins in her lifetime who attended upon her; before her holy dormition, she gave each of them one of her divine garments as a blessing. This old widow was of the family of one of those two virgins, and it had come through the generations into her hands. With the permission of God, that this holy relic might be had for the profit of many, the two men took the garment by stealth and brought it to Blachernae near Constantinople, and building a church in honor of the Apostles Peter and Mark, they secretly enshrined the garment therein. But here again, because of the multitude of miracles that were worked, it became known to the Emperor Leo, and a magnificent church was built, as some say, by that same Leo, but according to others, by his predecessors Marcian and Pulcheria, and enlarged by Leo when the holy raiment was found. The Emperor Justin the Younger completed the church, which the Emperor Romanus IV Diogenes raised up immediately again after it had burned in 1070. It burned again in 1434, and from that time it remained a small house of prayer together with the renowned holy spring. After the seventh century, the name Blachernae was given to other churches and monasteries by their pious founders out of reverence for this famous church in Constantinople. In this church John Catacuzene was crowned in 1345; also, the Council against Acindynus, the follower of Barlaam, was convoked here.

WEEKLY CALENDAR

See all events at:

annunciationbaltimore.org/calendar

LITURGICAL

- **Sun, 7/2 (4th Sunday of Matthew)**
 - 8:00am - Orthros
 - 9:30am - Divine Liturgy
- **Sun, 7/9 (5th Sunday of Matthew)**
 - 8:00am - Orthros
 - 9:30am - Hierarchical Divine Liturgy

COMMUNITY

- **Sun, 7/2 (3rd Sunday of Matthew)**
 - 5:00pm - AA and Al-Anon Meetings
- **Mon, 7/3**
 - Camp Good Shepherd
- **Tues, 7/4(4th of July)**
 - Office Closed
 - Camp Good Shepherd
- **Wed, 7/5**
 - Camp Good Shepherd
- **Thurs, 7/6**
 - Camp Good Shepherd
- **Fri, 7/7**
 - Camp Good Shepherd
 - 10:30am - Philoptochos 11th Annual Flea Market
- **Sat, 7/8**
 - 10:30am - Philoptochos 11th Annual Flea Market
- **Sun, 7/9 (5th Sunday of Matthew)**
 - 11:00am - Philoptochos 11th Annual Flea Market
 - 5:00pm - AA and Al-Anon Meeting



SCHOLARSHIPS

- **The United Chian Societies of Baltimore “Andreas Syggros” and Ladies Panchian Society** annual scholarship applications are now available online at www.chios.us or <http://chiossocietyofbaltimore.com/-2023scholarship-application>. Forms are also available on the "Welcome" table in the church lobby. **Application deadline is July 7.**

YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT

- **Please keep us in your prayers this week as we begin Camp Good Shepherd!**



- **Greek School Registration is now Open.** Greek School is open to all children for Intro to Prep through 6th Grade. Register your child at: <https://forms.gle/Jh1SkcoU4bGi4djL6> The first class will be on **Friday September 8th.**
- **Sunday School Registration is now Open** for Nursery (2 & 3 year olds) through High School. Register your child at: <https://forms.gle/Zy5bJs7q23fAvqdP8>. **Sunday School Open House will be Sunday September 10th** with a meet and greet.
- **Sunday School is looking for Volunteers** - Teachers, Substitute Teachers and Teacher Aids for the 2023/2024 school year. Contact Anastasia Georgiou at religioused@annunciationbaltimore.org.
- **The Greek School is looking for Teachers** for the 2023/2024 school year. Contact Sia Kyriakakos at 443-824-2573 or siakyriakakos@gmail.com. This is a paid position.
- **Please consider supporting our Youth Ministries** by making a donation in the labeled wooden collection box.

COMMUNITY

- **Philo托chos Apron Sale fundraiser** is underway to benefit the Philoxenia House Elevator Project. Each Apron is \$35. Use link: <https://forms.gle/mE87BULB6uKQdSC17> or Scan QR code to place your order. **The aprons will also be on sale TODAY** in the Father Monios Social Hall Foyer and throughout the summer. Contact Rhoulia Monios at rhouliaevie@yahoo.com for more information.
- **My Big Fat Greek Wedding 3 Exclusive PRIVATE Pre-Screening ~ Thursday, September 7th at 7pm** at the newly renovated Harbor East Cinemas (645 S President Street, Baltimore, MD 21202). Tickets are \$30 and include the movie, parking, popcorn & soda. Proceeds will benefit the Greek Orthodox Ministries of our sister churches: Cathedral of the Annunciation, St. Demetrios, St. Nicholas and Sts. Mary Magdalene & Markella. Scan QR Code to purchase tickets or visit: <https://forms.gle/zcaVxfB6daEVKFFE7>. Credit Cards accepted. No tickets will be sold at the door. Limited seating available. Questions contact: axioncharityevents@gmail.com. Brought to you by the Axion Charity Events, Inc.
- **AXION CHARITY EVENTS presents the Return of Thanos Petrelis ~ Live in Baltimore** for a Greek Concert to benefit the Greek Orthodox Churches in the Baltimore area - **Friday, October 13th** at Martin's Valley Mansion. For Sponsorship information, contact axioncharityevents@gmail.com. Tickets on Sale July 24th.
- **WORTHINGTON CHAPTER #30 – AHEPA - Save the Date** - The Worthington Chapter #30 is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year with a Dinner/Dance at Martin's Valley Mansion on **November 4, 2023**. For more information contact Bill Bond at bondgrp@comcast.net 410-913-2350.



STEWARDSHIP

- **2023 Stewardship Update:** To effectively manage our budget and discretionary spending, the Parish Council relies on the commitments made through pledges. Pledges provide important information about the number of families in our parish and allow you to register as a steward in good standing. We encourage all to formalize this commitment by making a pledge for 2023. **The Day Sponsor Steward Program** offers individuals a personal milestone that directly supports our parish and her ministries. You may choose a meaningful day throughout the year, whether it is a special occasion or a tribute to a loved one in memory or honor. Please consider the Day Sponsor Steward Program by becoming a **Day Sponsor Steward** (\$3500 annual pledge) or the new **Half-day Sponsor Steward** (\$1750 annual pledge). **2023 Stewardship commitment link:** <https://forms.gle/YAosrEyMkRimi84i8>. Hard copies are also available on the “Welcome” table in the church lobby.
- The office requests that you **DO NOT Submit 2022 Stewardship Envelopes. Offering Envelopes for 2023 are available** upon request. Fill out a 2023 Pledge Form and check the box asking to receive envelopes. You may also call the office or email office@annunciationbaltimore.org to request them.

SAVE THE DATE:

- **Sunday, August 27** - Blessing of the Backpacks and Donuts with Father Anastasios and Father John
- **Sunday, September 10** - Ministry Sunday
- **October 5 - 8** - Annunciation Greek Festival

CULTURE

- **Save The Date: Sunday, September 17, 2023. A Film and An Authentic Constantinople Lunch.** “A Touch of Spice” is a Greek film about a forty-year-old astrophysics professor who journeys from Athens back to Constantinople to visit his ailing grandfather whom he has not seen since he was a boy. This is a poignant story of love, gastronomical delights, and the non-violent events leading to the 1964 expulsion of Greeks from Constantinople. Lunch will be prepared by world-traveled chef, Alex Pappas. \$35.00 per person. For more reservations contact Mitsie Docollo at 410.561.7186 or mins1@verizon.net.
- **The Hellenic Heritage Museum of Maryland** welcomes those interested in pursuing the heritage of Greeks in Maryland to our weekly work sessions on Thursdays at the AOC from 10:30am to 1:00pm. Please contact Harry Maistros at harry.maistros@comcast.net for more information.

11TH ANNUAL FLEA MARKET

- 11th Annual Flea Market – The Philoptochos invites all to the Flea Market on Sunday following the Divine Liturgy. We are open on Friday, Saturday and Sunday from **June 30th - August 6th. Friday and Saturday hours are 10:30-2:00 and on Sunday, from 11:00 - 2:00.** Due to the generosity of our community we offer Clothes – Bags – Shoes – Jewelry – Furniture – Glassware – Housewares – Electronics – Lighting – Sporting Items – Luggage – Toys & Games – Garden Goods – Art – Books – Christmas – and MUCH, MUCH MORE. We thank you. For more information contact philoptochosannunciation@gmail.com, Judy Georges – TEXT 443-301-5041 or Georgeann Morekas – TEXT 443-845-1176.

MUSIC

- The Cathedral Choir is recruiting new members! Contact Fotini Fifi Nichols, fnichols1@verizon.net or 443-745-9686.

- **The Sacraments of Holy Communion (and Holy Unction when offered)** are reserved for those who are baptized and/or chrismated in a canonical Orthodox Church. Additionally, even though the priest or deacon may know your name, please speak audibly your full baptismal name when approaching to receive the sacraments.

PASTORAL

- **In order to protect our icons and liturgical items**, please blot any lip products before venerating icons or coming up for Holy Communion.
- **The Philoptochos has resources** available to those who require social services assistance. All requests are confidential and can be submitted to philoptochos@annunciationbaltimore.org or to Father Anastasios Fr.Anastasios@annunciationbaltimore.org or leave a message requesting a return call with the church office.

GIVING

- **Online Donations** can be made through our website. Click the DONATE button in the upper right corner. We are grateful for your continued stewardship!
- **For candles and tray donations**, you can also donate by text message, just text the dollar amount to (833) 934-2637 and follow the prompts.
 - Note: TextToTray can only be used for candles and tray donations.
 - We are also grateful for donations made by check.

DIGITAL COMMUNICATION

- **Cathedral Updates** – To receive Bulletins and other updates via email, visit <https://annunciationbaltimore.flocknote.com> and enter your contact information.
- **Text Alerts** - To receive ministries updates via text, text the ministry keyword below to phone number 84576:
 - **Hope/Joy → HopeJoy**
 - **GOYA → GOYA**
 - **Men's Fellowship → MensFellowship**

*****To all ministry, organization and committee leaders and members*****

Please contact the church office before you schedule ANY meetings, activities OR events.

If you would like to have information included in the Sunday Bulletin, please send your text and/or flyer to assistant@annunciationbaltimore.org by Wednesday at Noon.

For the September/October Newsletter, send to newsletter@annunciationbaltimore.org by AUGUST 19.

TODAY'S ENTRANCE HYMNS & READINGS

Resurrectional Apolytikion

Let the heavens be glad. Let the earth rejoice exceedingly. For the Lord has shown strength with his arm. He trampled death by death. He became the first-born of the dead. Out of the belly of Hades, He has rescued us, and to the world He has granted the great mercy.

Εὐφραινέσθω τὰ οὐράνια, ἀγαλλιάσθω τὰ ἐπίγεια, ὅτι ἐποίησε κράτος ἐν βραχίονι αὐτοῦ, ὁ Κύριος· ἐπάτησε τῷ θανάτῳ τὸν θάνατον· πρωτότοκος τῶν νεκρῶν ἐγένετο· ἐκ κοιλίας ᾗδου ἐρρύσατο ἡμᾶς, καὶ παρέσχε τῷ κόσμῳ τὸ μέγα ἔλεος.

Apolytikion for the Theotokos

Ever-virgin Theotokos, the shelter of mankind, you have given to your City as a protective wall the clothing and garment that you wore on your immaculate body. By your seedless childbirth, they have remained incorrupt. For in you both nature and time are made novel. Therefore we implore you, grant peace to your commonwealth, and great mercy to our souls.

Θεοτόκε ἀειπάρθενε, τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἡ σκέπη, Ἐσθῆτα καὶ Ζώνην τοῦ ἀχράντου σου σώματος, κραταῖαν τῇ πόλει σου περιβολὴν ἐδωρήσω, τῷ ἀσπὶρῳ τόκῳ σου ἄφθαρτα διαμείναντα· ἐπὶ σοὶ γὰρ καὶ φύσις καινοτομεῖται καὶ χρόνος· διὸ δυσωποῦμέν σε, εἰρήνην τῇ οἰκουμένῃ δωρήσασθαι, καὶ ταῖς ψυχαῖς ἡμῶν τὸ μέγα ἔλεος.

Apolytikion for the Deceased

Remember Your servants, O Lord, since You are good, and forgive them for all their sins in life; for no one is without sin except for You who are able to give rest to those who have passed away.

Μνήσθητι, Κύριε, ὡς ἀγαθὸς τῶν δούλων σου, καὶ εἴ τι ἐν βίῳ, ἥμαρτον συγχώρησον· οὐδεὶς γὰρ ἀναμάρτητος, εἰμὶ σὺ ὁ δυνάμενος, καὶ τοῖς μεταστᾶσι, δοῦναι τὴν ἀνάπαυσιν.

Apolytikion of the Parish

Today is the summary of our salvation, and the revelation of the age-old mystery. For the Son of God becomes the Son of the Virgin, and Gabriel announces the good news of grace. Therefore, let us join him, and cry aloud to the Theotokos: "Rejoice, Maiden full of grace! The Lord is with you."

Σήμερον τῆς σωτηρίας ἡμῶν τὸ κεφάλαιον, καὶ τοῦ ἀπ' αἰῶνος μυστηρίου ἡ φανέρωσις· ὁ Υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ, Υἱὸς τῆς Παρθένου γίνεται, καὶ Γαβριὴλ τὴν χάριν εὐαγγελίζεται. Διὸ καὶ ἡμεῖς σὺν αὐτῷ τῇ Θεοτόκῳ βοήσωμεν· Χαῖρε Κεχαριτωμένη, ὁ Κύριος μετὰ σοῦ.

Kontakion

You have bestowed your sacred Garment, O Lady, * to be a robe of incorruption, O pure one, * for all the faithful, O divine protection of mankind; * for with it you had arrayed your most pure sacred body. * Now with longing we observe the feast of its bestowal, * and in a loud voice we cry out with faith: * Rejoice, O Virgin, the boast of Christians everywhere.

Περιβολὴν πᾶσι πιστοῖς ἀφθαρσίας, θεοχαρίτωτε Ἀγνή ἐδωρήσω, τὴν ἱερὰν Ἐσθῆτά σου, μεθ' ἧς τὸ ἱερόν, σῶμά σου ἐσκέπασας, σκέπη θεία ἀνθρώπων· ἧς περ τὴν κατάθεσιν, ἐορτάζομεν πόθῳ, καὶ ἐκβοῶντες κράζομεν πιστῶς· Χαῖρε Παρθένε, Χριστιανῶν τὸ καύχημα.

EPISTLE (HEBREWS 9:1-7)

Brethren, the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly sanctuary. For a tent was prepared, the outer one, in which were the lamp stand and the table and the bread of the Presence; it is called the Holy Place. Behind the second curtain stood a tent called the Holy of Holies, having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, which contained a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail. These preparations having thus been made, the priests go continually into the outer tent, performing their ritual duties; but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood which he offers for himself and for the errors of the people.

Ἀδελφοί, εἶχεν ἡ πρώτη σκηνὴ δικαιώματα λατρείας τό τε Ἅγιον κοσμικόν. Σκηνὴ γὰρ κατεσκευάσθη ἡ πρώτη ἐν ᾗ ἦ τε λυχνία καὶ ἡ τράπεζα καὶ ἡ πρόθεσις τῶν ἄρτων, ᾗτις λέγεται Ἅγια. Μετὰ δὲ τὸ δεύτερον καταπέτασμα σκηνὴ ἡ λεγομένη Ἅγια Ἁγίων, χρυσοῦν ἔχουσα θυμιατήριον καὶ τὴν κιβωτὸν τῆς διαθήκης περικεκαλυμμένην πάντοθεν χρυσίῳ, ἐν ᾗ στάμνος χρυσοῦ ἔχουσα τὸ μάννα καὶ ἡ ῥάβδος Ἀαρὼν ἡ βλαστήσασα καὶ αἱ πλάκες τῆς διαθήκης, ὑπεράνω δὲ αὐτῆς Χερουβὶμ δόξης κατασκιάζοντα τὸ ἱλαστήριον· περὶ ὧν οὐκ ἔστι νῦν λέγειν κατὰ μέρος. Τούτων δὲ οὕτω κατεσκευασμένων εἰς μὲν τὴν πρώτην σκηνὴν διὰ παντός εἰσάσιν οἱ ἱερεῖς τὰς λατρείας ἐπιτελοῦντες, εἰς δὲ τὴν δευτέραν ἅπαξ τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ μόνος ὁ ἀρχιερεὺς, οὐ χωρὶς αἵματος, ὃ προσφέρει ὑπὲρ ἑαυτοῦ καὶ τῶν τοῦ λαοῦ ἀγνοημάτων.

THE GOSPEL READING (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.

Τῷ καιρῷ ἐκείνῳ, ἐλθόντι τῷ Ἰησοῦ εἰς Καπερναοὺμ 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 εἰμὶ ἱκανὸς ἵνα μου ὑπὸ τὴν στέγην εἰσέλθῃς· ἀλλὰ μόνον εἰπὲ 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 ἀπὸ ἀνατολῶν καὶ δυσμῶν ἥξουσιν καὶ ἀνακλιθήσονται μετὰ Ἀβραὰμ 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· Ὑπάγε, καὶ ὡς ἐπίστευσας γενηθήτω σοι. καὶ ἰάθη ὁ παῖς αὐτοῦ ἐν τῇ ὥρᾳ ἐκείνῃ.



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

ARCHIEPISCOPAL ENCYCLICAL

Prot. No. 178/2023

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,

... οὐ 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



ΙΕΡΑ ΑΡΧΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΗ ΑΜΕΡΙΚΗΣ

ΑΡΧΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΙΚΗ ΕΓΚΥΚΛΙΟΣ

Αριθμ. Πρωτ. 178/2023

Αρχιεπισκοπική ἐγκύκλιος γιὰ τὴν τετάρτη Ἰουλίου.

4 Ἰουλίου 2023

Πρὸς τοὺς Σεβασμιωτάτους καὶ Θεοφιλεστάτους Ἀρχιερεῖς, τοὺς Εὐλαβεστάτους Ἱερεῖς καὶ Διακόνους, τοὺς Μοναχοὺς καὶ τὶς Μοναχές, τοὺς Προέδρους καὶ τὰ Μέλη τῶν Κοινοτικῶν Συμβουλίων, τοὺς Ἐντιμολογιωτάτους Ἀρχοντες τοῦ Οἰκουμενικοῦ Πατριαρχείου, τὰ μέλη τῆς Ἠγεσίας τῶν 100, τὰ Ἡμερήσια καὶ Ἀπογευματινὰ Σχολεῖα, τὶς Φιλοπτώχους Ἀδελφότητες, τὴ Νεολαία, τὶς Ἑλληνορθόδοξες Ὁργανώσεις καὶ ὁλόκληρο τὸ Χριστεπώνυμο πλήρωμα τῆς Ἱερᾶς Ἀρχιεπισκοπῆς Ἀμερικῆς.

«Ὁὐ δὲ τὸ Πνεῦμα Κυρίου, ἐκεῖ ἐλευθερία» (Πρὸς Κορινθίους Β΄, 3:17).

Προσφιλεῖς ἀδελφοὶ καὶ ἀδελφές ἐν Κυρίῳ,

Ἡ τετάρτη Ἰουλίου εἶναι ἡ ἐθνικὴ ἐορτὴ ὅλων τῶν ἀμερικανῶν, ἀνεξάρτητα ἀπὸ τὸ πότε καὶ πῶς οἱ πρόγονοί τους ἔφθασαν σὲ αὐτὴ τὴν ὁμορφὴ χώρα. Εἴτε πρὶν ἀπὸ χιλιάδες χρόνια ὅταν κάποιοι διέβησαν τὸν Βερίγγειο Πορθμὸ, εἴτε ἐρχόμενοι μὲ τὰ καράβια τῶν ἀποίκων ἢ τῶν σκλάβων, εἴτε ἀκολουθώντας περίπλοκες διαδικασίες μετανάστευσης, ὅλοι εἴμαστε ἐδῶ ἐνωμένοι στὴν Ἀμερικὴ, μὲ σεβασμὸ καὶ ἀνεκτικότητα στοὺς συμπολίτες μας. Σὲ μία χρονικὴ συγκυρία, ὅπου ἀκούμε ὁλόένα καὶ περισσότερα μηνύματα μίσους ἀπὸ κάποιους πολιτικούς, εἶναι καλὸ νὰ θυμόμαστε ὅτι αὐτὴ εἶναι «ἡ χώρα τῆς ἐλευθερίας». Μία ἐλευθερία ποὺ ἀποτελεῖ συγχρόνως πολύτιμο δῶρο καὶ μεγάλη εὐθύνη.

Ὁ ἀπόστολος Παῦλος μᾶς ὑπενθυμίζει ὅτι ἡ ὑπέρτατη ἐλευθερία προέρχεται ἀπὸ τὸ Θεό, ἐν Πνεύματι Ἁγίῳ, τὸ ὁποῖο ἐνεργοποιεῖ τὴ συνείδηση τῆς ἐλευθερίας τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. Ἡ βάση τῆς ἐλευθερίας εἶναι ἡ ἀγάπη, διότι ἀγαπώντας ἡ καρδιὰ καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ σου ἀπελευθερώνονται ἀπὸ τὰ δεσμὰ τοῦ μίσους, τῆς κατακρίσεως καὶ τῆς ὑποκρισίας. Ἡ πραγματικὴ ἐλευθερία προϋποθέτει τὴ γενναιότητα τῆς ἀνάληψης τῶν μεγάλων εὐθυνῶν τῆς διατήρησης αὐτῆς τῆς ἐλευθερίας. Γιὰ αὐτὸ τὸ λόγο ἡ χώρα μας εἶναι γνωστὴ καὶ ὡς «ὁ τόπος τῶν γενναίων».

Βέβαια, ὅλοι δὲ μπορούμε νὰ ὑπερασπιστοῦμε τὴν πατρίδα μας μὲ τὰ ὅπλα, γιατί αὐτὸ εἶναι εὐθύνη τοῦ στρατοῦ, ἀλλὰ μπορούμε ὅλοι μας νὰ ὑποστηρίξουμε τὴν ἰδέα. Διότι ἡ ἐλευθερία δὲν ἐξασφαλίζεται μὲ τὰ ὅπλα, ὅσο ἰσχυρὰ καὶ νὰ εἶναι αὐτά! Ἡ ἐλευθερία ἐξασφαλίζεται μὲ τὴ στάση κάθε πολίτη, ὅταν ἀναγνωρίζει τὰ δικαιώματα καὶ τὴν ἐλευθερία τῶν ἄλλων. Ἡ συμπεριφορὰ μας πρὸς τὸν πιὸ ἄδυναμο καθορίζει καὶ τὴν ποιότητα τῆς δημοκρατίας μας.

Γιὰ τὸ λόγο αὐτό, ἂς ἐορτάσουμε τὰ διακόσια σαράντα ἑπτὰ χρόνια τῆς ἀμερικανικῆς ἀνεξαρτησίας, συνεχίζοντας τὸν ἀγῶνα γιὰ μία ἐνωμένη Ἀμερικὴ, ὅπου ὅλοι θὰ ζοῦμε εὐλογημένοι καὶ χαρούμενοι, μὲ πνευματικὴ ἀφθονία καὶ ὕλικὴ ἐπάρκεια. Ὡς ὀρθόδοξοι χριστιανοί, ἂς εἴμαστε εὐγνώμονες γιὰ τὴν ἐλευθερία ἐν Ἁγίῳ Πνεύματι ποὺ ἀπολαμβάνουμε, καὶ ἂς ἀγωνιστοῦμε ὥστε ὅλοι οἱ συμπολίτες μας νὰ μετέχουν ἰσότιμα στὰ ἀγαθὰ τῆς «γῆς τῆς ἐλευθερίας καὶ τοῦ τόπου τῶν γενναίων».

Εὐχομαι σὲ ὅλους σας, εὐλογημένη καὶ χαρούμενη Ἡμέρα τῆς Ἀνεξαρτησίας.

Μετὰ πατρικῶν ἐν Κυρίῳ εὐχῶν,

† Ὁ Ἀμερικὴς Ἐλπιδοφόρος

† Ὁ Ἀμερικὴς Ἐλπιδοφόρος

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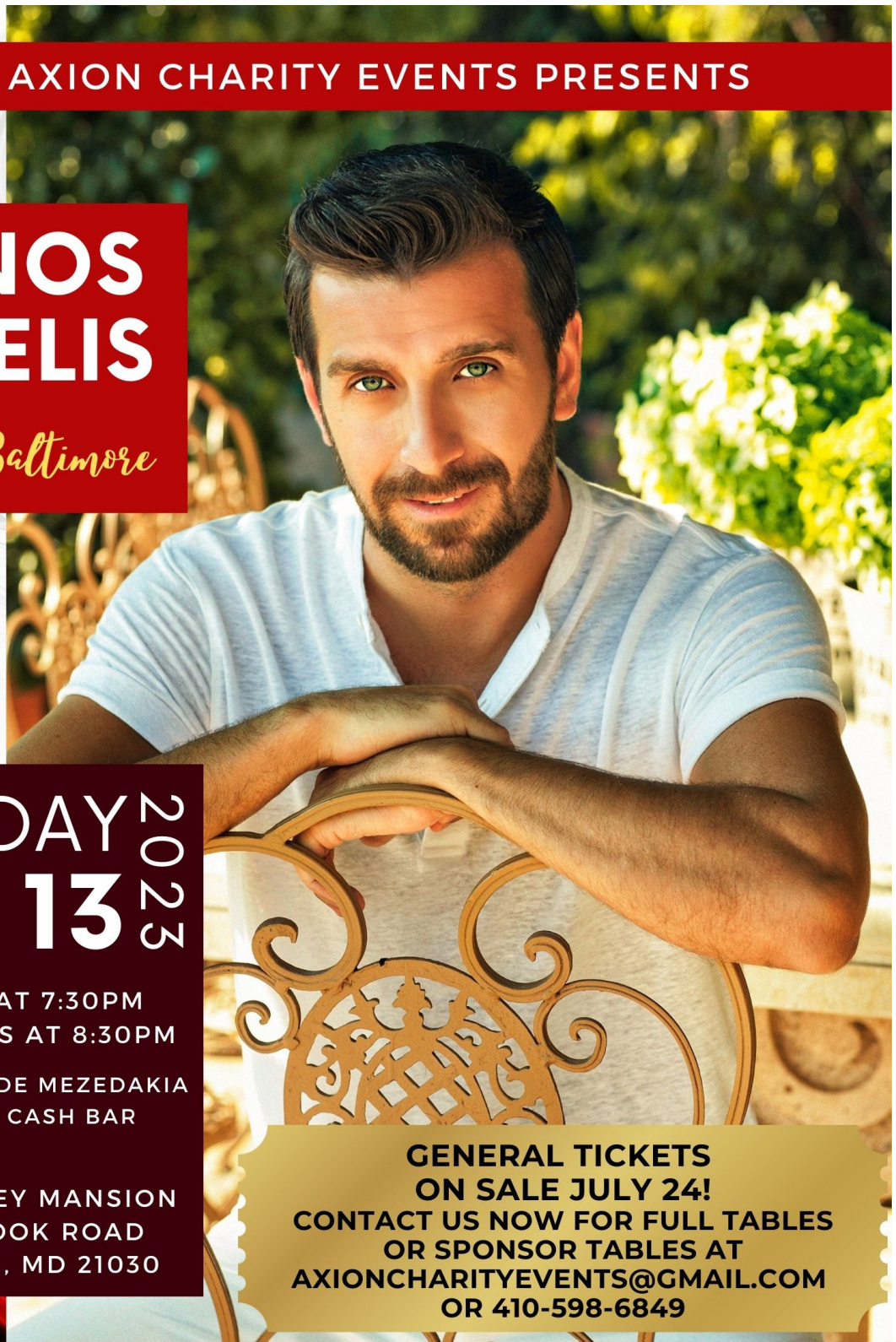




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