



## GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

### ARCHEPISCOPAL ENCYCLICAL

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#### Archiepiscopal Encyclical on the New Year

January 1, 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:

*I, who am a creature of God, am called to be God... (PG 36, 560A).*

Beloved Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

On this first day of the 2023 New Year, let us invoke for inspiration in the coming year the memory of the Saint of God who reposed this day so many centuries ago: the shining Hierarch of Cappadocia and Teacher of the *oikoumene*, Basil the Great. We have many traditions around Saint Basil the Great — the giving of gifts on his Feastday, the Vasilopita, our St. Basil Academy in Garrison, New York, which is a National Institution that proudly bears his name. But beyond even these beloved traditions, we also have the legacy of this saintly hierarch, which offers us a profound understanding of what it means to be a human being.

The aforementioned quote was remembered by Saint Basil's lifelong friend, Saint Gregory the Theologian, who recalled the Saint's words in the eulogy he delivered at his funeral. Such a simple expression, and yet here, midway between the infancy of our Lord at Christmas and the fulness of His humanity at Theophany, Saint Basil reminds each of us of the nature of our high calling in Christ. Yes, we are creatures, but we are called to be God, or what the Fathers of the Church would term as *theosis*, or divinization.



Imagine the New Year of 2023 as a series of opportunities for *theosis* in your life. You do not have to be a monastic or even an ascetic to embrace this aspiration. Each moment, every encounter, all the people that you meet — they are all opportunities for you to act as God acts; to speak as God speaks; and to love as God loves.

We often hear our friends talk about their “New Year’s resolutions,” their intentions to either spend more time with family, to lose weight, or the thousand other commitments we try to make at the turn of the New Year. This year, though, let us follow the example of the Great Basil of Caesarea. Let us take our lives — humble and even faulted — and let us make of them a chance to become godlike in our ways. This is the realization of our human nature, created in the image and according to the likeness of the Holy Trinity, which is a communion of love.

May 2023 be filled with moments where your lives are changed and transformed by the love of God, so that you can share abundantly with the world around you the fullness of what it means to be a creature that aspires to be like our Creator.

With paternal love in Christ Jesus,

† ELPIDOPHOROS  
Archbishop of America