



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA ARCHEPISCOPAL ENCYCLICAL

Prot. No. 197/2024

Archepiscopal Encyclical on the Fourth of July

July 4, 2024

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.

And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.

My beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord,

The Fourth of July is our National Birthday, celebrating the Declaration of Independence, a truly remarkable document that every American should read every year on this date. For with mere language, it renewed a positive vision for the human *polis*, one that has stood the test of time, but which has always been a process. Through the centuries, our Nation has suffered incalculable harms: slavery, the Civil War to end it, genocidal programs against Indigenous Peoples, and battles for equality, suffrage, and economic opportunity by women and all manner of minorities, racial, ethnic, and otherwise. The Constitution of our Nation, ratified fourteen years after the Declaration of Independence, presciently predicted that our United States of America would always be in process to “form a more perfect Union.”

For “democracy,” the noble experiment conceived by the Hellenic mind over 2,500 years ago, has never been static. Democracies — even a representative one like ours — cannot be reduced to historical models that resemble fossils more than living organisms. And this is why, in the last line of the Declaration, lies a roadmap for how our great country can come together, regardless of the political views one might hold.

We behold how “a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence” is the guarantee of our liberties. On such a basis, without exclusivism, we can “pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.” A belief in a higher purpose for our freedom is ultimately the unifying principle by which we can bond as fellow-citizens, even when there are passionate



differences among us. It has held this great Nation together through the greatest struggles, both foreign and domestic, and it can bind up and heal any wounds in our national consciousness, lest they fester and infect our domestic tranquility and prosperity.

Therefore, on this and every Fourth of July, let us appeal to our Loving and Providential God in unison with all our fellow citizens. Let us remember what it is to love this Land, and be willing to sacrifice our utmost for the benefit of all. If we can thus “mutually pledge to each other” on the foundation of God’s providential love for us, we shall remain a truly United States of America. A blessed and happy Fourth of July to all!

With paternal love in Jesus Christ,

† ELPIDOPHOROS
Archbishop of America