

GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

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July 4, 2017
Independence Day

To the Most Reverend Hierarchs, the Reverend Priests and Deacons, the Monks and Nuns, the Presidents and Members of the Parish Councils of the Greek Orthodox Communities, the Distinguished Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Day, Afternoon, and Church Schools, the Philoptochos Sisterhoods, the Youth, the Hellenic Organizations, and the entire Greek Orthodox Family in America

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Our annual commemoration of the 4th of July, Independence Day in the United States of America, provides us with an opportunity to reflect on the blessings of liberty and to express our gratitude to our forbearers for the freedom that has been advanced and sustained throughout the history of this country. We have and experience a multitude of social, political and economic freedoms because many sacrificed courageously to protect the highest ideals, others engaged in challenging debate and decisions over the shape of governance and society, and countless more have cherished freedom by respecting the rights and liberties of others.

We are truly blessed to live in a country where our freedom to live, to move, and to seek unlimited opportunities represent the tremendous benefits and potential of a free society. As Orthodox Christians we are also blessed to understand this freedom through our relationship with God and the liberty we have through Christ. In his letter to the Galatians, the Apostle Paul affirms this connection: *For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another* (5:13).

As people called to liberty, we see our freedom in this country as an opportunity for service. Our freedom is an opportunity to offer a witness of true and abundant life in Christ. In a free society we are able to go and share the good news of grace, salvation, and healing offered by God to all. We are truly free to give our resources and time to meet the genuine needs of others, using our liberty as an opportunity to serve one another. This is the blessing of liberty, and from the service we offer to one another more blessings will come through seeing lives transformed by the power of God's grace.

In your commemoration and fellowship on July 4th with your families and communities, I ask each of you to reflect on your liberty and how your freedom is an opportunity to care for and serve others. Consider ways you can offer service in the grace of God to your family members, coworkers, neighbors and others in need in your community. As people called to liberty who live in a free society, our service will lead to great and marvelous works for the honor and glory of God.

With paternal love in Him,

†DEMETRIOS

Archbishop of America