

# **GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA**

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*As the Father has sent me, so I send you.* (John 20:21)

January 1, 2017

Feast of Saint Basil and New Year

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,

As we welcome the new year on the Feast of Saint Basil, we are strengthened and inspired by the mighty acts of God in 2016. One of our tremendous blessings was the gathering in Nashville for the 43<sup>rd</sup> Biennial Clergy Laity Congress of our Holy Archdiocese. Our theme for the Congress was “You are the Voice of Christ in a Changing World,” and we continue our focus on this theme as we plan our ministry and service in the year to come.

The commemoration of Saint Basil the Great on this day provides us with an example of holiness, leadership, and service that embodies this theme. From his prayerful manner of life and his deep faith and spiritual insight, we see a man who knew Christ and lived in His presence. Through his sermons, theological treatises, and pastoral diakonia he was the voice of Christ. He lived during a time marked by theological controversies and transitions related to Christianity and the Church. Many people had significant physical and spiritual needs. In this very challenging and changing period, Saint Basil offered wisdom, comfort, and guidance by the grace of God.

In following the witness of Saint Basil and many other Fathers of the Church who have been the voice of Christ, we are sent by our Lord into the world and into this new year to share the Gospel of faith and love, to bring comfort and healing with God’s grace, and to help others know Christ and His blessings of peace and life.

He sends us as His voice into a world that continues to change. At the beginning of each calendar year we are reminded of this rapid change as we survey the events of the last twelve months. We are called as Orthodox Christians to meet this change with grace and truth. We do this as we commit to the timeless mission of the people of God to live and proclaim the Gospel. We also do this as seen in the breadth and substance of our ministries and through expanding and adapting our work to meet contemporary needs. We are sent by Christ with a message of hope and life and with the wisdom to navigate a changing and challenging world while sharing His grace in effective ways.

On this Feast of Saint Basil we also share the voice of Christ through our support of our beloved Saint Basil Academy. For over seventy years this has been a place of peace, faith, and nurture for children and youth, offering them love and care in the name and presence of Christ. May we offer our prayers for the directors, benefactors, and residents of the Academy. As we participate in the cutting of the Vasilopeta in our communities, may we respond generously to the call of our Ladies Philoptochos Society to support this vital ministry.

May we also affirm our commitment to be the voice of Christ in all that we do. Certainly, we will be His voice through the witness of our worship; but let us also be His voice through the growth and quality of our ministry to families, children, youth, and senior adults. Let us be His voice through the quality of our educational work and resources. Let us be His voice in our outreach to the unchurched. Let us be His voice in our homes, schools, and workplaces. Let us be His voice in traditional, unique, and inspiring ways so that others will find life and peace in Him.

With paternal love in Christ,  
†DEMETRIOS  
Archbishop of America