

GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

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November 24, 2016
Thanksgiving 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,

The Thanksgiving holiday is a joyous day of celebrating the blessings of life. Traditions connected to faith, family, and community have developed in this country, affirming the importance of offering thanks to God for these blessings and recognizing the many ways we are blessed by Him.

We are blessed through God's compassion and care for all that He has created. Our Lord asked, *Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?* (Matthew 6:26) He knows our needs, even those we think are small and insignificant. Because God's love and provision are always with us, because He created us and sustains us by His grace, we give thanks.

We are blessed abundantly by this wondrous power of His grace. It is a power that heals, redeems, protects, and saves. The Apostle Paul proclaimed this power by stating, *For by grace you have been saved through faith; and it is not of your own doing, it is the gift of God.* (Ephesians 2:8) We accept this gift by faith and with thanksgiving. We offer thanks to God in communion with Him through the Holy Eucharist, a communal act filled with grace. Because God loves us and by His grace seeks to restore us to eternal fellowship with Him, we give thanks.

We are blessed because in Him we have life, and we *have it abundantly.* (John 10:10) He created us in His image and has given us the breath of life. Through Christ we see life as it should be lived. We see the path to meaningful life. In Him life has purpose and direction, and our lives begin a journey of faith that leads us from abundant to eternal life. We give thanks for the blessing of life.

We are blessed with the anticipation of salvation and glory to come. (Revelation 19:1) We are thankful to God that so many before us have endured for our sake so that in the words of the Apostle Paul *we may obtain salvation in Christ Jesus with its eternal glory.* (II Timothy 2:10) Because we have hope in deliverance, joy in the light of the Resurrection, and assurance in God's promises, we give thanks.

As you observe Thanksgiving Day, may all of these blessings be on your hearts and minds. May this be a day of giving thanks to God for His grace, and may His abundant blessings be on each of you and your families. Through your thanksgiving and your joy in His blessings may you offer a witness to the world of the life and love we have in Him. Have a blessed Thanksgiving Day.

With paternal love in Christ,
†DEMETRIOS
Archbishop of America