



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

March 18, 2009

HIS EMINENCE METROPOLITAN ALEXIOS MESSAGE ON GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY

March, 2009

My dearly beloved,

On this blessed and glorious Day of Independence, I greet you with love and joy in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, giving thanks and praise for all the abundant blessings in our lives, especially the great gift of freedom.

The celebration of Greek Independence Day on March 25th is inspired by one of the great Feast Days of our Church, the Annunciation of the Theotokos, for on that blessed day, Bishop Germanos of Patras raised the banner of a free Greece, in an act of defiance against the Turks, marking the beginning of the War of Independence, and the end of nearly 400 years of Ottoman oppression. During the Turkokratia, thousands were killed or tortured for their faith, or for simply teaching the children our culture, history and language. In those dark days, they were sustained and strengthened by their Orthodox faith, for it was the Greek Orthodox Church that helped to retain our very identity as Hellenes and Orthodox Christians by the institution of Crypha Scholia.

Our own American democracy has its roots in Greek philosophy and ideals, and the friendship between our two nations reflects our shared values, common goals, and mutual respect. As Greek Orthodox Christians and citizens of the United States of America, we are sustained and inspired by our belief in individual rights, in the rule of law, the opportunity to live without fear, to speak our own minds, to practice our religion, and to participate in our government. These are not only the ideals that strengthen and motivate us, as Hellenes and Orthodox Christians, but are also the values that we share with all people who cherish freedom, equality and the rule of law.

It is this legacy we honor as we celebrate Greek Independence Day,

realizing the truth of the Greek proverb, "The passion for freedom never dies." I thank God for this special occasion to pay tribute to the courage of our forefathers and to celebrate with friends and neighbors the beauty of freedom! Let us never forget the sacrifices Greeks have made throughout the ages to preserve freedom and democracy. Let us never take for granted the freedoms we enjoy, and let us never forget to use these freedoms for the good of others and in the service of our Lord. May Almighty God bless us and keep us free of tyranny, so that we might worship Him and serve Him with joy and gladness, as we strive always to be disciples of Christ in the world. May God bless us and grant us liberty, prosperity, and peace, and may our celebration of Greek Independence Day be a symbol of hope for all enslaved peoples around the world.

Zeto i Ellas, zeto i eleftheria!

With faithful commitment to His service, I remain

Prayerfully yours with paternal love in Christ,

+ALEXIOS
Metropolitan of Atlanta