



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

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Archepiscopal Encyclical on the 2023 Archepiscopal Encyclical on the Feast of the Three Hierarchs and the Day of Greek Letters

January 30, 2023

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:

Those who partake of our Paideia are called Greeks.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

The Feast of the Three Holy Hierarchs: Basil the Great, John Chrysostom and Gregory the Theologian, is also an anniversary to celebrate the learning, culture and language of Greece — what we call “Greek Letters.” The inscription cited above is adapted from the Panegyricus of the renowned rhetorician, Isocrates (436-338 BCE).

This elegant expression, which graces the frieze of the façade on the Gennadius Library in Athens, could have been spoken by any of the Three Hierarchs; for they understood Paideia as an all-encompassing summation of education, expression and civilization. But the Hierarchs would have gone one step further. They could have also easily said: “Those who partake of our Faith are called Christians.”

In both cases, the idea of participation in the milieu of Orthodox Christianity and Hellenism is what brings a person into that identity. It is what we mean by “baptism,” and why baptism by immersion is so important. To immerse oneself in the Gospel or in Paideia is to become suffused with their teachings and spirit. For those who call themselves, “Greek



Orthodox,” there is neither confusion of the traditions, nor is there a contradiction between the two. The Feast of the Three Holy Hierarchs is a testimony to the symphony that emerges when all the elements of each are manifested in harmony and concord.

Therefore, my beloved Greek Orthodox Christians, let us celebrate all the ways that these three Luminaries of our Paideia and Faith confirm the unity of our spiritual and historical paths. And let us partake of the riches of each, thus becoming ourselves, “partakers of the Divine Nature” (II Peter 1:4).

With paternal love in Christ Jesus,

† ELPIDOPHOROS
Archbishop of America