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Archepiscopal Encyclical for the Exaltation of the Holy Cross
The Feast of the Universal Exaltation of the Precious and Life-giving Cross

September 14, 2025

Unto the Most Reverend and Right Reverend Hierarchs, Pious Priests and Deacons, Monks and Nuns, Presidents and Members of the Parish Councils, Honorable Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Members of Leadership 100, Day and Afternoon Schools, Philoptochos Societies, Youth, Greek Orthodox Organizations, and entirety of the Christ-named Plenitude of the Sacred Archdiocese of America:

Χαῖρε, Κριτοῦ δικαίου φανέρωσις…. (Ἀκάθιστος τοῦ Τιμίου Σταυροῦ, Ν)
Hail, Manifestation of the Righteous Judge…. (Akathist of the Holy Cross, N)

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

Today, we hail the Precious and Life-giving Cross of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. In many of our parishes, the Akathist to the Holy Cross is chanted in overflowing praise. Like so many of our magnificent liturgical texts, this Akathist contains glimpses and glimmers of the mystery of our salvation in Christ, which illumine our spiritual path and teach us the deep things of God.

It is not without purpose that our Theological School is named "Holy Cross," because the Cross of our Lord is one of the greatest teachers in the two thousand years of the Church. We have amazing and erudite Saints, like Basil and the Gregorys, whose writings endure through the ages, and who are studied intently at our Theological School. But the Holy Cross of our Lord teaches wordlessly. It teaches by example, and by sheer manifestation. Therefore, when we chant, "Hail, Manifestation of the Righteous Judge," we come to the realization that the Lord, hanging upon the Cross, is being revealed to us as the Righteous Judge.

Let us all pause for a moment and consider the only truly innocent human being, put to death for the sake of every other human being. It is an unfeigned "sign of contradiction," as the Prophet Simeon the Elder said (Luke 2:34). For from the Cross, the Lord delivers no judgment of anyone — not his crucifiers, nor the ones who clamored for His destruction, nor those who ridiculed Him in His agony. The Lord, the Judge of the Universe, judged no one; rather, He gave His life for the life of the world with forgiveness.

Such is the lesson for each of us, then, as we praise the Holy Cross. To forgive, rather than condemn. To love, rather than despise. These are the lessons that are at the core of our training of the good people studying at our beloved Hellenic College and Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology. Today, on their Feastday, let us remember this vital Institution of our Church and support its mission, as we apply ourselves to the lesson of the Cross, the greatest teacher of our souls.

With paternal love in Christ,



† ELPIDOPHOROS
Archbishop of America

ΙΕΡΑ ΑΡΧΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΗ ΑΜΕΡΙΚΗΣ
ΑΡΧΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΙΚΗ ΕΓΚΥΚΛΙΟΣ

Ἀριθμ. Πρωτ.: 423/2025

Ἀρχιεπισκοπικὴ Ἐγκύκλιος γιὰ τὴν ἑορτὴ
τῆς ὑψώσεως τοῦ τιμίου καὶ ζωοποιοῦ Σταυροῦ.

14 Σεπτεμβρίου 2025

Πρὸς τοὺς Σεβασμιωτάτους καὶ Θεοφιλεστάτους Ἀρχιερεῖς, τοὺς Εὐλαβεστάτους Ἱερεῖς καὶ Διακόνους, τὶς Πρεσβυτέρες καὶ τὶς Διακόνισσες, τοὺς Μοναχοὺς καὶ τὶς Μοναχές, τοὺς Προέδρους καὶ τὰ Μέλη τῶν Κοινοτικῶν Συμβουλίων, τοὺς Ἐντιμολογιωτάτους Ἄρχοντες τοῦ Οἰκουμενικοῦ Πατριαρχείου, τὰ μέλη τῆς Ἡγεσίας τῶν 100, τὰ Ἡμερήσια καὶ Ἀπογευματινὰ Σχολεῖα, τὶς Φιλοπτώχους Ἀδελφότητες, τὴ Νεολαία, τὶς Ἑλληνορθόδοξες Ὀργανώσεις καὶ ὁλόκληρο τὸ Χριστεπώνυμο πλήρωμα τῆς Ἱερᾶς Ἀρχιεπισκοπῆς Ἀμερικῆς.

«Χαῖρε, Κριτοῦ δικαίου φανέρωσις…»
(Χαιρετισμοὶ εἰς τὸν Τίμιον Σταυρόν. 11ος Οἶκος).

Προσφιλεῖς ἀδελφοὶ καὶ ἀδελφὲς ἐν Χριστῷ,

Σήμερα ὑψώνουμε καὶ τιμοῦμε τὸν τίμιο καὶ ζωοποιὸ Σταυρὸ τοῦ Κυρίου καὶ Σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. Σὲ κάποιες ἐνορίες μας ψάλλονται καὶ οἱ Χαιρετισμοὶ πρὸς τὸν Τίμιο Σταυρό. Αὐτὸς εἶναι ἕνας ὕμνος πλήρης δοξολογίας καὶ εὐγνωμοσύνης! Ὅπως καὶ ἄλλα λειτουργικὰ κείμενα, ὁ ὕμνος αὐτὸς ἀναδεικνύει τὸ μυστήριο τῆς σωτηρίας, φωτίζοντας τὴν πνευματική μας πορεία καὶ ἐξερευνώντας τὰ βάθη τοῦ Θεοῦ.

Δὲν εἶναι τυχαῖο ὅτι ἡ Θεολογικὴ Σχολή μας φέρει τὸ ὄνομα «Τίμιος Σταυρός»! Διότι ὁ Σταυρὸς τοῦ Κυρίου ἀποτελεῖ ἕναν ἀπὸ τοὺς μεγαλύτερους διδασκάλους τῆς Ἐκκλησίας μέσα στὰ δύο χιλιάδες χρόνια τῆς ἱστορίας της. Ἔχουμε σοφοὺς καὶ ἐμπνευσμένους ἁγίους πατέρες, ὅπως ὁ Μέγας Βασίλειος καὶ οἱ δύο Γρηγόριοι, τῶν ὁποίων τὰ συγγράμματα μελετῶνται καὶ ἀξιοποιοῦνται πλήρως στὴ Σχολή μας. Ὁ Σταυρός, ὅμως, διδάσκει χωρὶς λόγια· διδάσκει μὲ τὴν ἴδια τὴν παρουσία του καὶ μὲ τὴν ἔνδοξη φανέρωσή του. Ἔτσι, ὅταν ψάλλουμε «Χαῖρε, Κριτοῦ δικαίου φανέρωσις», ἀντιλαμβανόμαστε ὅτι ὁ Κύριος ἐπὶ τοῦ Σταυροῦ φανερώνεται ὡς ὁ Δίκαιος Κριτής.

Ἂς σταθοῦμε λίγο νὰ τὸ συλλογιστοῦμε. Ὁ μόνος ἀληθινὰ ἀθῶος ὑποφέρει τὸν θάνατο, παρέχοντας τὴ σωτηρία σὲ ὅλους τοὺς ἀνθρώπους. Ὄντως, «σημεῖον ἀντιλεγόμενον», ὅπως προφήτευσε ὁ θεοδόχος Συμεών (Λουκ. β', 34). Ἐπὶ τοῦ Σταυροῦ ὁ Χριστὸς δὲν κρίνει κανέναν· οὔτε τοὺς σταυρωτές του, οὔτε ἐκείνους ποὺ ἐπεδίωξαν τὸ θάνατό του, οὔτε ὅσους χλεύαζαν τὸ πάθος του. Ὁ Κύριος, ὡς ὁ κριτὴς τῆς οἰκουμένης, δὲν κατεδίκασε· ἀλλὰ πρόσφερε τὴ ζωή του, «ὑπὲρ τῆς τοῦ κόσμου ζωῆς», συγχωρώντας μὲ ἄπειρη ἀγάπη.

Αὐτὸ εἶναι τὸ μάθημα τοῦ Σταυροῦ καὶ γιὰ μᾶς. Νὰ συγχωροῦμε, ἀντὶ νὰ καταδικάζουμε. Νὰ ἀγαποῦμε, ἀντὶ νὰ μισοῦμε. Αὐτὲς εἶναι καὶ οἱ ἀρχὲς ποὺ ἀποτελοῦν τὸ θεμέλιο τῆς μορφώσεως καὶ τῆς διακονίας τῶν σπουδαστῶν μας στὸ Ἑλληνικὸ Κολλέγιο καὶ τὴ Θεολογικὴ Σχολὴ τοῦ Τιμίου Σταυροῦ. Σήμερα, ἡμέρα τῆς ἑορτῆς τους, ἂς μνημονεύσουμε αὐτὸ τὸ ζωτικὸ καθίδρυμα τῆς Ἐκκλησίας μας. Ἂς ὑποστηρίξουμε μὲ κάθε δυνατὸ τρόπο τὴν ἀποστολή του, καὶ ἂς ἐφαρμόσουμε καὶ ἐμεῖς τὴν διδαχὴ τοῦ μεγίστου παιδαγωγοῦ τῶν ψυχῶν μας, τοῦ τιμίου καὶ ζωοποιοῦ Σταυροῦ.

Μετὰ πατρικῆς ἐν Χριστῷ ἀγάπης,



† ὁ Ἀμερικῆς Ἐλπιδοφόρος