



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA ARCHEPISCOPAL ENCYCLICAL

Prot. No. 38/2026

Archeepiscopal Encyclical on the Feast of Saint Photios, Patriarch of Constantinople

February 6, 2026

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 Sacred Archdiocese of America:

*For his memory is immortal, known both by God and mortals.
(Wisdom of Solomon 14:1, from the Vespers of the Saint)*

Beloved sisters and brothers in Christ,

Saint Photios the Great, Patriarch of Constantinople, is a Hierarch of the Church whose fame is truly immortal. The commitment and energy that he devoted to spreading the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ throughout the Slavic Lands — while defending the good order of the Church against encroachments — are indeed praiseworthy and merit our gratitude. It should be clear, then, why our Saint Photios National Shrine glorifies his name. For the Shrine, in St. Augustine, Florida, commemorates the first Greek Immigrants to the shores of America, and through them, all those who came to this Continent seeking a better life and carrying the Orthodox Christian Faith in their hearts.

The word, “apostle,” comes from the Greek that means “one who is sent.” Our Immigrant Forebears came to these shores, often sent by their families, either from Greece or from Asia Minor. They may not have been sent here for the express purpose of evangelizing the New World, but by their very piety and practice, they proved to be messengers and defenders of the Orthodox Faith. They founded parishes and built churches as soon as they could. These “first-comers” set foundation stones upon which

we continue to build right up to this day, “Jesus Christ being the Chief Cornerstone” (Ephesians 2:20).

Therefore, just as we keep the memory of Saint Photios the Great immortal, so also, we are impelled to keep these heroic dreamers in memory, which is precisely what we do through the Saint Photios National Shrine. Let us all make a commitment to support the work of the Shrine, and thereby inspire the many “newcomers” to our Faith by the example of these “first-comers.” May the Lord, through the intercessions of Saint Photios, always grant that we commit to being sent on the mission of our Church, which is One, Holy, Catholic and indeed Apostolic!

With paternal love in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be in a cursive or semi-cursive script. The signature reads "† Ελπιδόφορος" († Elpidophoros).

† ELPIDOPHOROS
Archbishop of America