



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS ^{OF} ATLANTA

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΑΤΛΑΝΤΑΣ

March 25th, 2021

To the Reverend Clergy, Monastics, Parish Council Presidents, Philoptochos Presidents, Archons, Youth, and all the Faithful of the Metropolis of Atlanta:

My beloved brothers and sisters in Christ,

This year, we are blessed to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Greek Revolution for Independence. However, I believe that March 25th, 1821 must be considered only the formal declaration of Revolution that had already begun in spirit.

Throughout the Turkish occupation, Greek monks were important in creating a revolutionary idea as they organized the secret schools in monasteries, which passed down the Hellenic identity through our Orthodox Faith, as well as our history and the Greek letters. Priests and Monastics, like St. Kosmas o Aitolos, were also important in their capacity as travelling preachers, who gave pride to the faithful Greek population, so that they might be ready when the time for Revolution came.

In the 18th Century, there begin to circulate, revolutionary writings, such as those of Korais, or the Θούριος by Rigas, a kind of Odyssey which seeks to inspire the people to fight for their freedom, and for universal human rights. We must also mention the work of Evgenios Voulgaris, Athanasios Psalidas, Nikeforos Theotokis, Dimitris Katakzis, all of whom sought uplift the *phronema* of the people.

We see these words become actions, when we look at the Χορός του Ζαλόγγου, the “Dance of Zalongou”, where the women of Souli (outside of Ioannina in Epirus), sacrificed themselves to protect the Greek identity. When we look at all this history as preparation over the decades, it must lead to change.

In the early 1800s, many Orthodox Christian Hellenes left Greece for Orthodox Russia (or other parts of Europe) and became successful scholars, businessmen, and even soldiers. By the 1800s, the Hellenes—together with those friends of Greece we call Philhellenes—began to consider plans and methods to free the motherland. To accomplish this, they created what we call



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Φιλική Εταιρεία, or the Society of Friends, in the city of Odessa, in Ukraine. The influence of this secret organization, which sought to organize plans for a Revolution, soon spread throughout the Greek-speaking world, even to the capital of the Ottoman Empire, Constantinople.

A gathering of the Society in Vostitsa (present day, Aegio) on January 26th, 1821, is where systematic plans for the Revolution were put in place. Then, on March 17th, 1821, at the Agia Lavra Monastery (in present-day Kalavryta), the leaders of the Society met with Bishop Germanos of Patras for the Feast of St. Alexios the Man of God. In those days, the monasteries were very large centers: Agia Lavra had 450 people living there, with 3,000 people in the surrounding area. Upon concluding the four days-long meeting with the Divine Liturgy, the Bishop blessed their mission, and so began the quest for freedom.

Through this short synopsis of the beginnings of the Revolution, I hope you can understand how deeply our forefathers believed in both their freedom, and in their faith. After 400 years of slavery (500 in some other places not then united with Greece), they understood that freedom is in fact a precious gift given to us from God, and one which is best protected through our faith in Him. Therefore, they chose to mark their Revolution on the day that the world was promised freedom and salvation, which is the Annunciation.

Knowing these things, I pray that we join in prayer, both to honor the memories of our patriotic forefathers, and to give glory to God who has blessed us with such a rich and proud legacy. I remain,

Prayerfully yours with paternal love in Christ,

+ALEXIOS
Metropolitan of Atlanta