



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

ARCHEPISCOPAL ENCYCLICAL

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**Archepiscopal Encyclical  
On the Feast of the Universal Exaltation of the Precious and Life-giving Cross**

September 14, 2023

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-loving Plenitude of the Sacred Archdiocese of America:

*O most glorious wonder! Today the Cross Which bore the Most High is beheld exalted from the earth, as a cluster of grapes full of life.*

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Today, we celebrate the Universal Exaltation of the Holy and Life-giving Cross – the special Feastday of our Hellenic College and Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology. In its Exaltation, the hymns of the day call to mind that this Cross is no piece of dried and dead wood, but a living and vibrant source of spiritual refreshment. For the Cross is the Holy Trellis upon which the True Vine stretched forth as a divine cluster of grapes granting spiritual nourishment to the world. The Cross is the Sacred Arbor upon which our human nature was washed clean of sin and death by the Precious Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who, as the Scripture says, “washed His robe in the blood of grapes” (Genesis 49:11).

This “blood of grapes” is a prophetic image of the Mystical Offering that we receive in every Divine Liturgy. Through our Lord’s grace and love for mankind, we partake of His Body and Blood through the ministrations of our clergy. They participate in His High Priesthood for this singular purpose – to bring that “cluster of grapes full of life” into the experience of the Faithful, so that we may be filled with the hope of eternal life.



Our beloved School is the place where our clergy are trained and prepared to make these offerings for the life of the world. Through the integration of knowledge and right (Orthodox) belief that they receive at Hellenic College and Holy Cross, they serve the Body of the Church in the preparation and distribution of the Mystical Supper, as well as in the many aspects of ministry that enliven our parishes. Therefore, let us offer all of our support and strengthen this most precious Institution of our Sacred Archdiocese, so that the Divine Cluster of Grapes may always be pressed and shared in all our communities, through the Power of the Holy and Lifegiving Cross.

With paternal blessings and love in Christ,

† ELPIDOPHOROS  
Archbishop of America