



## GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA ARCHEPISCOPAL ENCYCLICAL

Prot. No. 22/2026

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

January 30, 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:

*The unexamined life is not worth living.  
(Socrates, *Apology*: 38a5-6)*

Beloved brethren in Christ,

On this Day when we celebrate the Three Holy Hierarchs — Saints Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian and John Chrysostom — we also mark the Day of Greek Letters, a special observance of our appreciation for Hellenic learning, literature, philosophy, and the myriad implications and effects of Greek Civilization upon our world throughout the last five thousand years (and beyond!). The great Theologians of our Church recognized in the Ancient Greek Philosophers a kindred spirit. Because centuries before the Birth of our Savior Jesus Christ — and without contact with the Hebrew Prophets of old — those Philosophers were committed to the search for Truth and to investigating the nature of reality. Thus, they were considered as “Christians before Christ,” and even given iconographic representation in many of our most famous monasteries (e.g., Vatopedi on Mount Athos).

Of course, the most famous of all these Philosophers is Socrates, whose wisdom and wit was bequeathed like an inestimable treasure to humanity by his devoted student, Plato. Among his many maxims is the quote we commenced with: “The unexamined life is not worth living.” This renowned phrase encapsulates a fundamental truth that is approachable both from the point of view of reason and that of faith. Looking deeply into ourselves, into our hearts and minds to probe our motivations, our intentions and our values, is a spiritual practice that can enhance our lives in every way. The Fathers of the Church recognized these philosophical teachings as being not only applicable to the Christian way of life, but completely consistent with it, and therefore commended them to the Faithful. They used the taxonomies and nomenclature of Greek Philosophy and Language to express the profound truths of the Orthodox Christian Faith. Thus, they examined every aspect of human existence and found the most worthy and valuable qualities by which to live.

Therefore, beloved brothers and sisters, let us honor this day and celebrate the marvelous synthesis of Faith and Reason represented by the Three Holy Hierarchs, and by the magnificent legacy of Greece to the world. Let us commit to living examined lives, filled with the spiritual blessings that come from such a conscious endeavor, an exercise that reflects the very best of our Faith and our Culture.

With paternal blessings in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be in a cursive or Gothic script. The signature reads '+ ELPIDOPHOROS'.

+ ELPIDOPHOROS  
Archbishop of America