



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

Foreword

*This is my commandment:
that you love one another,
as I have loved you.
(John 15:12)*

The appearance of this needful and excellent text, “For the Life of the World: Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church,” presents a mature and reasoned discourse about our engagement with the world and with each other, not only to the Orthodox Christian Faithful, but to all people of good will. Let us be grateful to the First Throne of Orthodoxy, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, for Her patronage of its contributors and editors, and her sanction of its substance. Just as a good mother teaches her children well, the Holy Mother and Great Church of Christ offers these considerations for the edification and enrichment of all, under the exceptional leadership of His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, whose depth of vision and breadth of experience lend invaluable perspective to the apostolate of the Church.

This statement does not pronounce clear-cut responses to social challenges, but instead proposes general guidelines to difficult questions. Like every published document, the work may convey a sense of something finished and complete, but it is actually an initiation of a continuing conversation, an ongoing meditation on what “the Spirit is saying to the Churches” (Revelation 2:7). As Orthodox Christians, we know that the Lord Jesus Christ said and did so much more than is recorded, such that if everything had been written down, the world itself could not contain the books (cf. John 21:19). Therefore, as his disciples of our own day and time, we are responsible to bring forth the manifestation of the “great love with which he loved us” (Ephesians 2:4), from his divine teaching and the unbroken and uncompromised tradition of his apostles and disciples throughout history.

In a very real sense, what follows in these pages is a continuation of the sacred and profound work of the historic Holy and Great Council of Crete (2016). This ongoing extrapolation of the Council’s pastoral and ministerial accomplishment is a practical and pastoral, rather than an academic or analytical application of the essential teachings of the Christian Faith. Each heading defines an area of Christian concern, presenting theological context and spiritual perspectives in a clearly elucidated discourse. The text is most apt for furthering conversations about current and open-ended questions of contemporary life.

In the end, what this text does is open us up to the implications of what it means to be loved by God, and to respond to that love by loving one another. It speaks to the best of our shared humanity, acknowledging from its first paragraph that every human being is created to “look up to and see God,” even as the very word “human” in Greek, “ἄνθρωπος” derives from “ἄνω θρόσκειν,” to leap up on high.”

Indeed, we are created and destined to live in such a way that we reflect the love of our Creator for every creature. This text offers to the reader, who is willing to listen, insight and guidance on how to participate in life in the world, all the while enjoying the life in the Spirit. It is my prayer and hope that its enlightened discourse will spur all of us to lift our sights to our higher purpose, to the better angels of our nature, and to richer and deeper communion with God and with one another.

Great Lent 2020

A handwritten signature in blue ink, written in Greek. The signature reads "to Αμερικης Ελπιδοφορος". The first part "to" is written in a cursive style, and the rest of the name is also in cursive.

† Archbishop ELPIDOPHOROS of America