

## ***Encyclical of Archbishop Demetrios for the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross***

### **Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,**

On this Feast of the Universal Exaltation of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross, we commemorate the finding of the holy Cross of our Lord by Saint Helen when she visited Jerusalem in the year 326 to venerate holy places related to the life, ministry, Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ. Confirmed as the Precious Cross by healing a dying woman who touched it, the Cross was venerated by Saint Helen and by all present, proclaiming “Lord have mercy” as Patriarch Makarios lifted it up for all to see. This glorious and blessed event led to the institution of the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross and our annual celebration of its power of redemption and as a symbol of reconciliation through Christ.

The response of the faithful to the finding of the Cross and its elevation by the Patriarch was filled with joy and thanksgiving to God; and while we fast on this day in recognition of the sacrifice made by our Lord on the Cross, it is a day and a celebration that offers a witness to the world of the power of God’s love for us. We lift up the Cross because while it was used as an instrument of torture and indignity, it brought honor and glory to God. It was used as a means of ending life, but it became entrance to eternity. It was used as a violent weapon, but for believers it became a weapon of true peace. The Cross, a symbol of suffering and defeat, through Christ it became a symbol of hope and victory. Instead of death, our Lord through the Cross brought us life and abundance of life.

On this feast, the elevation of the Cross is a beautiful and mighty witness of the Gospel of truth and love. It is a testimony of the power of God’s grace and of the salvation that is offered to all through faith in Christ. This feast is also a call to each of us to look to the Cross and to turn the eyes of our soul towards the Cross and to lift it up for others to see. We lift up the Cross of Christ when we are not hesitant or afraid to identify ourselves as Orthodox Christians in any context or environment. We lift up the Cross when our homes and families become a dwelling of Christ. We lift up the Cross for all to see the power of faith and grace when we live in the way of the Cross that is when we sacrifice for the will of God and the needs of others, when we live in love and humility, and our lives constantly show the way to Christ.

**As we commemorate this Feast and reflect on the witness of the Cross, it is also our annual tradition to offer our prayers and support for our beloved Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology. In lifting the Cross and offering a witness of the Gospel, our Schole of the Holy Cross has a vital role in the life of the Church and our Holy Archdiocese. At this sacred institution those who have taken up the Cross of our Lord and followed His call to the Holy Priesthood and ministry receive the guidance and training they need to be bearers of the Cross. Within an environment of worship and prayer, of academic excellence, and of fellowship in Christ, students are able to look to the Cross, nurture their faith and commitment, and experience the hope, power and victory that is essential to a life of service. May we offer special prayers on this day for the students, faculty, staff, trustees and benefactors of our beloved School of Holy Cross, and please consider prayerfully your support for our Schole and for current and potential seminarians from your parish.**

**Today, the Precious and Life-giving Cross will be raised before us in Churches throughout the world. As we look upon it, venerate it, and give glory to God for what has been accomplished through Christ for our salvation, may we renew our commitment to lift up the Cross each day of our lives. Through the gift of the power of the Cross and the grace of God, may we show others the way to Christ and to eternal life.**

With paternal love in Him,

†DEMETRIOS

Archbishop of America

**Please consider prayerfully your support for Hellenic College – Holy Cross. We will pass a second tray today.**

## BECAUSE OF YOU

494

Between 2004 and 2014, four hundred ninety-four high school juniors and seniors enrolled in the CrossRoad Summer Institute at HCHC and grew more connected to their faith. CrossRoad has also prepared more than 40 graduate students with intensive training in youth ministry.

*"As a result of my experience at CrossRoad, I got involved in OCF at Michigan State University and consequently felt a calling toward ministry."*

— Nick Lionas (CrossRoad '05, MDiv '13)

1/2

For half of the academic year, college students from other colleges and universities around the country come to Hellenic College for the Semester of Faith program.

*"The whole experience has really given me a sense of who I am."*

— Christina Eliades, Washington College, Maryland (Semester of Faith '13)

137

Since 2000, Leadership 100 has provided scholarships to seminarians enrolled in Holy Cross. To date, 137 of the ordained clergy who are serving our Archdiocese today were supported by L100.

*"A vibrant church in America begins with the education and spiritual formation of its leaders, and that is what happens at Hellenic College Holy Cross."*

— Fr. Alexandros Petrides (MDiv '13)

7

This year, seven students earned the Certificate in Byzantine Music. This is the first such certification program in the Western Hemisphere and the only one outside of Greece or Lebanon.

*"Today is an historic day in the life of Byzantine music and in the life of this academic institution of higher learning."*

—Archdeacon Panteleimon Papadopoulos (MDiv '01), upon earning the certificate

90

The percentage of GOA clergy who are graduates of HCHC

*"I strongly believe that this school is the heart and the mind of our Church in America."*

— His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of America

8:1

The student/faculty ratio at Hellenic College for the Spring 2014 semester

*"The small class size allows for a lot of individual interaction and dialogue with your professors and your classmates. You get a new perspective, and it might be something you never thought of before."*

— Nikoletta Evangelatos (Human Development major '15)

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