

ΕΛΛΗΝΟΡΘΟΔΟΣΙΟΝ ΠΑΤΡΙΑΡΧΕΙΟΝ
ΙΕΡΟΚΟΛΥΜΩΝ



GREEK ORTHODOX PATRIARCHATE
JERUSALEM



Dear Members of the American Hellenic Institute, Brothers and Sisters, Friends:

We would like to extend Our warmest congratulations to the American Hellenic Institute on its 44th Anniversary of Hellenic Heritage Achievement and National Public Service Awards Dinner, as well as to the distinguished recipients of the awards, and We join you in celebrating their commitment toward those special values that we share as Hellenes, as Christians, as local citizens and as global citizens.

The legacy of Hellenism is the legacy of humankind as we hope to be remembered, and it is manifested here tonight. It was the Hellenic inclination toward seeking truth and acting in accordance with it, which made the ancient Greeks heroes, and later on with the birth of Christianity, made them saints and martyrs. Indeed Christianity is the natural progression of the Hellenic spirit of seeking and living by truth. The Greeks were among the first people to recognize this truth in Jesus Christ the Logos, and the fruits of their labors have been a testament to this fact throughout the ages. We in the Holy Land owe our very survival to the Orthodox heritage, which protected our holy places – the physical link between heaven and earth – for two millennia.

In this spirit, We take this opportunity to express heartfelt appreciation to Our dear friend Ambassador Patrick Theros, whose personal and professional convictions, together with the greater support of the United States, have helped Us to achieve what some had called impossible. For 1,500 years, the Gulf State of Qatar did not officially recognize Christian presence, despite the fact that Christians and even local saints dwelled in the region centuries earlier. However, last month in Doha, We had the unique blessing and honour to dedicate our newly completed church of St. Isaac and St. George, where hundreds of families from all over the world join as one community in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The course of history was altered more than 20 years ago, in large part thanks to the United States Administration and State Department through the Ambassadorship of Mr. Theros, who facilitated Our official relations with His Highness the Emir Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad Al-Thani to serve the Christians living in Qatar. Our subsequent agreement with the Monarchy to build a church, in turn paved the way for other denominations to do the same, and today hundreds of thousands of Christians freely worship in the country they call home.

We commend Ambassador Theros for his charismatic, respectful, and integrity-based approach to diplomacy, which has been an asset not only to Our cause, but to his foreign service in regions often familiar with conflict and strife. Moreover, his dedication to his family, faith, culture, and to humanity, have been evident in all areas of his life. Here we must also thank Mrs. Aspasia Theros, who was likewise instrumental and supportive of Our initiative, and is a beautiful force in her family's life. With a Hellenic mind that appreciates the connection between all things, Ambassador Theros has contributed diplomatic experience with boundless energy to a variety of matters, and continues to offer his time to causes that educate and bring people together for the common good. We applaud this lifelong work and are personally grateful.

We wish you a successful event, and pray that each of you in your own capacities and through the work of the AHI, keep the legacy of Hellenism alive through your actions and in your hearts. You have Our support and appreciation from the Holy City of Jerusalem.

With Our Patriarchal blessings and best wishes,

THEOPHILOS III
PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM

Holy City of Jerusalem
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