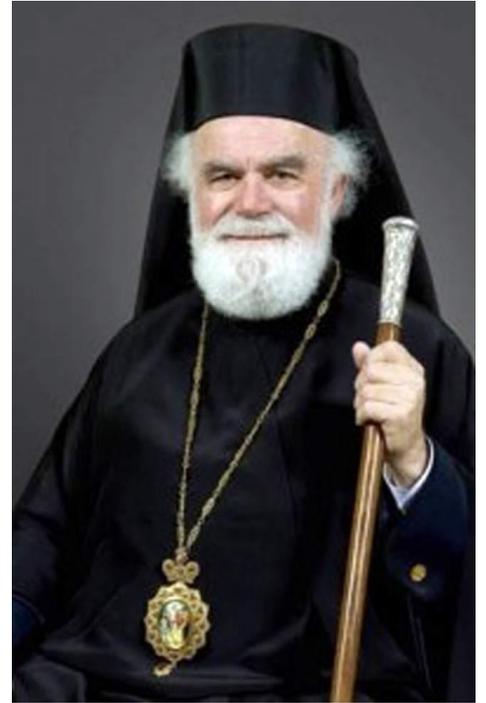


My Beloved Ones,

This weekend, January 13-16th in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, our Metropolis of Atlanta continues its beloved tradition of the Hellenic Dance Festival. First allow me to offer my thanks to the Chair of the Executive Board, Fr. Mark Leondis; the spiritual advisor, Fr. Constantine Simeonidis; Eleni Hopes, HDF Vice-Chair; and the Metropolis Liason, Julie Moricz.

From my perspective, HDF is not simply a weekend of fellowship, or an artistic competition—HDF allows our young people to connect with our “Ellinochristianikos Politismos,” our “Helleno-Christian Civilization.” In an era when tradition is easily cast aside and forgotten, events like the Hellenic Dance Festival allow our next generations to maintain a connection with their ancestors, and to the culture which directly shaped their parents and grandparents.



Beyond the Festival providing what I believe is a vital connection to our Hellenic heritage, I know in my heart that HDF has the ability to produce spiritual fruits as well. In his First Epistle to the Corinthians, St. Paul writes that, *"since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel"* (1 Cor 14:12). Our young people work very hard, practicing their routines and programs far in advance of the Festival, so that they may honor not only their heritage, but also their Church. Our young people understand that winning a medal might bring honor to themselves and their communities, but of course, glory is temporary. They work, not for the recognition, but for the connection to something greater than themselves. And in doing so, they strive for the greater glory of God.

I would like to give my deepest well wishes to all of the teams who are participating this weekend, praying that they may compete in a spirit of fervor and love. For all those who are attending as spectators, I pray that you travel safely as you come to cheer on our young people.

I pray that God continue to bless this important Festival, as well as each and every one of us.

+ALEXIOS

Metropolitan of Atlanta