

The Dignified Combatants of 1821 for the Dignity of Greece and of Her Children

*Your Beatitude; Most Reverend and Right Reverend Holy Hierarchs;
Venerable Fathers and Mothers;
Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ;
Right Honorable Mayor and Deputy District Administrator;
Ladies and Gentlemen:*

Glory to God for all things!

I warmly thank Father Dionysios and all of his collaborators, because they have succeeded at putting into practice this evening the glorious exhortation of our national poet, Kostas Palamas:

“Become intoxicated with the immortal wine of ‘Twenty-one!’”

At the critical turning point through which our homeland is passing, we are in need of such *intoxication* with the strong *wine of '21* [1821 marked the beginning of the Greek War of Independence against the Ottoman Empire—*Trans*].

Not, of course, that we should get drunk and lose all sense of reality....

The *immortal wine of 1821* engenders sobriety, which enables us to understand the spiritual depth of the War of Independence.

At this point, I will not reiterate what we have already heard this evening, which was beautiful, important, instructive, and sanguine.

Please allow me, rather, to shed some light on an aspect of 1821 which, being timeless, illuminates the past, present, and future of our homeland.

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In the last few days I happened upon a veritable jewel, whose radiance deeply astonished me. It was a short text:

“If, at the end of the day, you have managed to safeguard the dignity of but one person, that alone is already [a great] victory.”

Dignity, especially as our civilization and our Orthodox Faith have cultivated and transformed it into a Greek and Christian ethos, charac-

terized the dignified combatants of 1821.

I will not go on at great length. I would just like to make a brief reference to a text by the blessed General Makrygiannes (1797-1864), which demonstrates the dignity of the Fathers of our Nation, who sacrificed themselves for the dignity of Greece and of her children.

The legendary Makrygiannes, one of the leaders of the uprising of September 3, 1821, which forced the tyrannical Bavarian King Otto to grant a Constitution, wrote his will that evening, since he feared that his life was in danger at the hands of the government powers:

To Thy glory, O Lord, the flag of freedom is raised this evening against tyranny! To the glory of the just and great God.

O Lord Almighty! Thou, O Lord, wilt save this innocent nation. We are sinners, but Thou art God! Have mercy on us, enlighten us, and bestir us against trickery and deceit and the systematic tyranny against our Fatherland and Religion. To Thy glory, O Lord, is the flag of freedom raised this evening! Compatriots! I die for my Fatherland. I stand by my first vow.



I cannot, O my Fatherland, see you in this way, with the children of those who have been killed and the old women begging, and maidens dishonored for a piece of bread by the deceivers of our Fatherland. The prisons are crowded with combatants, and in your alleyways sit begging the very same fighters who shed their blood for the sake of our being able to say again **“Greece [my] homeland.”** Either liberty for our struggles and sacrifices, or death to us! I shall be the first to die, this night. Farewell, compatriots, and in the next life we shall meet again, there where our fellow combatants are also to be found, **in the bosom of the true King, the great and true God.**

Dignity, a profoundly noble respect for our selves and others, combined, indeed, with a valiant attitude of self-sacrifice, is clearly manifest in this brief extract.

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The magnificent dignity of General Makrygiannes is highlighted yet further when we add that, on the eve of the Revolution, Makrygiannes

had in his possession in Arta a house, estates, cash, and bonds, which amounted to a considerable sum of money—and all of this, including his own self, he put at the disposal of the sacred Struggle.

Greeks in our own day grieve over this lost dignity, the forfeiture of which, at a personal and national level, does not allow us to be worthy successors of the dignified combatants of 1821. What is more, our homeland's loss of dignity is put on display for the whole world to see.

An authoritative western newspaper of international renown, in an extensive article exposing the notorious corruption in the field of armaments, derides us, writing:

“Corruption was so rampant inside the Greek equivalent of the Pentagon that even a man of relatively modest rank was able to amass nearly nineteen million dollars in just five years on the job.”

In conclusion, if we wish to preserve the identity of our homeland, we must rediscover our lost dignity. We do honor to the dignified combatants of 1821 by emulating their dignity. **The great victories today are achieved at the level of dignity:** a profoundly noble respect for ourselves, others, and our blessed homeland.

Then we will be genuine scions of the dignified combatants of 1821, and not wretched descendants, demolishers and destroyers of our ancestral treasures.

“May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you!”

I wish you a Good Pascha!

March 17/30, 2014

Fourth Sunday of Great Lent

† Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Phyle