



The Saint Photios Greek Orthodox National Shrine

Located at 41 St. George Street in historic downtown St. Augustine, Florida

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Press Release

January 22, 2015

February Events Celebrating the 34th Anniversary of the Dedication of St. Photios Greek Orthodox National Shrine in St. Augustine

St. Augustine, FL –Archon Dr. Manuel N. Tissura, 1st VP of the St. Photios Foundation, is pleased to announce the Archpastoral visit of His Eminence, Metropolitan Alexios of Atlanta, to St. Augustine February 5-8, 2016. His Eminence will preside over the ecclesiastical services and meetings to be held throughout the weekend in celebration of the Feast of St. Photios the Great, Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople. Metropolitan Alexios will be assisted by Rev. Dr. Nicholas G Louh, Protopresbyter of St. John the Divine Greek Orthodox Church in Jacksonville, FL, and Vicar for the Metropolis of Atlanta.

Archieratical Great Vespers and the Blessing of the Five Loaves will be held on Friday, February 5th at 6:00 p.m. The Foundation welcomes Demetrios Constantine, Cassandra Garibaldi, Alexander Kamilaris, and Sarah Livick-Moses of Hellenic College Holy Cross. With the blessing of His Eminence, Metropolitan Alexios, the beneficence of Helen A. Carlos of Atlanta, GA, and the hospitality of Connie and James Demetriou of St. Augustine, these student ambassadors will be the chanters for the weekend services while sharing the HCHC experience with area parishes.

The Friday evening event will be followed with a reception and a presentation of sacred music provided by the St. Augustine Chorale.

Archieratical Divine Liturgy, followed by the Founders' Memorial Service will begin with matins at 9:00 a.m. on Saturday, February 6th. Shrine Founders of blessed memory include George and Olga Fotiou, James and Stella Kalivas, Athanasios Xynidis, and Martha and Spero Zepatos. All were residents of St. Augustine, who had a hand in procuring the Avero House which became the St. Photios Greek Orthodox National Shrine of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. Surviving founders are Gerry & Steve Sarris, and Despina Xynidis.

At noon, the St. Photios Foundation will then convene for their annual Trustees Luncheon at the Casa Monica. Supreme President of AHEPA (American Hellenic Education Progressive Association), John W. Galanis of Milwaukee, WI, will present *AHEPA – Our Heritage and Our Church*.

The faithful will return to the St. Photios Chapel for Great Vespers Saturday evening at 6:00 p.m. and on Sunday, February 7th, Archieratical services will begin at 9:00 a.m. at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, CR 214 in St. Augustine. His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios will be assisted by Rev. Fr. Theodore Stavru.

The public is invited to join the St. Photios Foundation for the 34th Annual Feast Day Banquet at the Casa Monica Hotel on Sunday, February 7th at 1:00 p.m. Nicholas Furriss of Spectrum Films will serve as emcee. Special greetings will be offered by Daughters of Penelope Grand President, Connie Pilallis. Rev. Dr. Christopher Metropoulos, President of Hellenic College Holy Cross in Brookline, MA, will give the keynote address. Tickets are \$65.00 and may be purchased by calling the Shrine at 904 829 8205.

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St. Photios the Great, whose feast day is February 6, was Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople during the middle of the ninth century. Together with other great Fathers of the Church, Saint Photios demonstrates through his writing and his teaching that scholarship can be a valuable instrument in proclaiming and expressing the Faith of the Church. The Orthodox Church honors Saint Photios as a theologian, a supporter of missionary activity, and a defender of the Faith. Photios was born around 820 AD to holy parents, who were confessors of the Faith. His parents were persecuted for defending icons against the iconoclasts and were exiled from Constantinople.

His greatness was not only due to his defense of Orthodoxy against heretical papal practices, but also connected to his love and meekness. He vigorously opposed the addition of the filioque clause to the Nicene - Constantinopolitan Creed, and wrote *On the Mystagogy of the Holy Spirit* to preserve "the purity of our religion" and to hinder "those who chose to promote any other definition of dogma than the unanimous and common faith of the pious".

St. Photios was forced to become Patriarch of Constantinople; however he took his calling seriously and at once set to work as a man of God. One of his activities was to correct the error of Pope Nicholas of Rome who enslaved the people of the West with threats of condemnation to hell for disobedience to the pope. Holy Photios wrote to Nicholas, "Nothing is dearer than the Truth." In the same letter he noted, "It is truly necessary that we observe all things, but above all, that which pertains to matters of Faith, in which but a small deviation represents a deadly sin."

St. Photios was also known for his brilliance and for his missionary zeal, and one of his greatest achievements was in the field of mission work. In 863, St. Photios sent his two nephews from Thessaloniki, known to us today as Saints Cyril and Methodios, to preach the Gospel in Moravia. He blessed St. Cyril in his work of developing an alphabet for the Slavonic people, and for the later work of St. Cyril and his brother St. Methodios as missionaries to the Slavs. As a result of efforts they initiated, the Slavic peoples and nations embraced Orthodox Christianity.

As a Father of the Church, his achievements as Patriarch have earned him a reputation as the greatest of all Patriarchs.

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