



# GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

## ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΣΗΣ

### Exaltation of the Holy Cross 2013

The Very Reverend and Reverend Clergy,  
Honorable Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Esteemed Members of the Metropolitan Council, Esteemed Members of the Parish Councils, Philoptochos Societies, Faculty and Students of the Catechetical and Greek Afternoon Schools, Directors and Participants of all Youth Organizations, and all devout Orthodox Christians of the Greek Orthodox Communities of our Holy Metropolis of New Jersey,

My Beloved in the Lord,

*“Through the Cross, joy has come to all the world.”* As we celebrate, today, the exaltation of the Holy, Life-bearing Cross, we are reminded of the significance of this paramount of symbols. This symbol which had previously been associated with extreme shame since the people in the time of Christ understood crucifixion to be the death of criminals, is now associated with extreme humility as we Orthodox Christians understand Christ’s crucifixion to be the pinnacle of His love for us. What had once been seen as a major source of pain and suffering is now seen as a source of joy and life. Thus, the symbol of the Cross has been transformed by Christ since He humbled Himself even to the point of enduring the Cross for our sake.

In suffering death on the Cross for us and resurrecting from the dead, Christ gives us the ability to be victorious against all spiritual adversity. For it is this symbol with which we are adorned at our baptism as we take up our own Cross and follow Christ. It is this symbol which we are enshrined in when chrismated as our bodies become temples of the Holy Spirit. It is this symbol which we carry in our hearts and minds all the days of our lives as we struggle to live according to God’s will.

Through this symbol, Christ imparted faith to us in order to strengthen us in our spiritual resolve so that we may faithfully live and preach His word. Through this symbol, the Apostles were given faith as they were told to *“Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”* (Mt. 28:19). Through this symbol, the martyrs were bolstered in their determination to follow Christ even unto death as *“...they were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, and were slain with the sword”* (Heb. 11:37) knowing that though they may die, yet shall they live.

Thus, the image of the Cross no longer provokes an image of death, but rather epitomizes the promise of the resurrection, for without the Cross there is no resurrection and without the resurrection the Cross is no longer a source of life. However, having experienced

the reality of both the Cross and the resurrection through Holy Scripture, we are enabled to rejoice exceedingly in the symbol of the Holy and Life-bearing Cross. We rejoice for, as we see in the aposticha hymns from the vesper service of today's feast, it proclaims the Cross is, "a rival of the demons". Rejoice for the Cross is, "the surrounding wall of the Church". Rejoice for the Cross is, "the door of Paradise".

Therefore, my dearly beloved, rejoice in the Cross of Christ for "through the Cross, He has destroyed death by death" and we have experienced renewed life. Praying that the symbol of the Holy and Life-bearing Cross endures in your life as a symbol of joy and Christ's never-ending love for us, I remain,

With Paternal Love and Blessings,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Metropolitan Evagelos". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

† E V A N G E L O S  
Metropolitan of New Jersey