



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

Feast of the Holy Cross 2014

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 Metropolis of New Jersey

My Beloved,

As we celebrate the elevation and universal exaltation of the Life-bearing Cross on which our Lord, God, and Savior, Jesus Christ was outstretched in the single most self-sacrificial act in the history of the world, we are once again given cause for tremendous joy. Having felt the sting of death through the disorder of the first Adam, Christ puts death to death and offers us life through his precious and Life-giving Cross as the last Adam. Thus, in place of this sting of death, we are granted the remedy to death through the Cross and resurrection of our Lord so that we may all attain eternal life. It is for this reason that we celebrate this day as we encounter not the method by which one was killed, but the means by which all of creation was saved.

How are we to understand the magnitude of human salvation through such a symbol of pain? How are we to comprehend the exuberance all creation experiences with such a figure of agony? How do we reconcile the paradox of the Cross as being the chief instrument of torture known to the world at that time and yet as being the gateway to Paradise? These things can only be explained by the fact that the Lord, in his overflowing love for humanity, willingly sacrificed himself for all of us so that we might live in complete communion with Him. In this way, the Cross no longer holds this stigma of shame or agony, but has been transformed by our Lord's humility into a symbol of triumph and joy by which even the Devil himself was unable to bear. The entire understanding of the Cross is radically changed when our Lord is crucified for the life of the world. It is in this experience of the Cross of our Lord that we come to realize and acknowledge that this transformed symbol now takes on a different meaning and becomes an integral part of our lives which helps to lead us in our journey to salvation.

We are blessed with the sign of the Cross when we are brought into the Church as a newborn. We wear the Cross on the day we are baptized and initiated as a member of His Holy Church. We make the sign of the Cross when we pray as a means to remember this ultimate sacrifice which has borne the fruits of immortality through Christ. We see the symbol

of the Cross in the Old Testament readings as it prefigures the saving passion of Christ. All people receive munificent blessings bestowed upon them when the blessing of our Lord is made in the sign of the Cross. Do you see, my beloved children in Christ, how the Cross and the crucifixion transformed the meaning of this most disturbing of symbols from something that deprives life to something that blossoms life? Therefore, we must give due deference to this most paramount of symbols within the life of the Church.

We must all wear our physical Cross and ensure our children wear their own Crosses not as a piece of jewelry, but as an expression of our faith and love for Christ. We must not be afraid to make the sign of the Cross in public as there can be no shame that comes from this most glorious sign of Christ's triumph over death. We must bear our spiritual Crosses as Christ endured his own Cross so that we may find ourselves worthy of His Kingdom. Finally, we must keep the Cross in the forefront of our spiritual lives remembering daily that, as believers of the Living God, *"If we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his"* (Rom. 6:5). Praying that you may be guarded and guided by the power of the precious and Life-giving Cross, I remain,

With Paternal Love and Blessings,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Metropolitan Evangelos". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the text "With Paternal Love and Blessings,".

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