



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

New Ecclesiastical Year 2016

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 Sisterhood,
Faculty and Students of the Catechetical and Greek Afternoon Schools,
Directors and Participants of all of the Youth Organizations, and all devout
Orthodox Christians of the Greek Orthodox Communities of our
Holy Metropolis of New Jersey

My Beloved,

*"Bless the Lord, O my soul. O Lord my God, You are magnified exceedingly...
[You] established the earth on its stable foundation."
(Psalm 103:1-5)*

More than twenty-five years ago, on September 1, 1989, His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Demetrios issued the first Patriarchal Encyclical on the protection of the natural world. This day coincides with the first day of the ecclesiastical year, also known as the *"Indiction,"* following the ancient Byzantine practice. This initiative was then followed by all of the Orthodox Churches, and later by various other Christian Churches and denominations. The 1989 Encyclical declares: *"the first day of September of each year to be the day of the protection of the environment, a day on which, on the occasion of the feast of the Indiction, which is the first day of the ecclesiastical year, prayers and supplications are offered in this holy center of Orthodoxy for all creation."*

Since then, the Ecumenical Patriarchate in general, and His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew in particular, have been committed to the spiritual vocation of the Church to protect our planet as a whole. Why is this commitment so important in today's world? Beyond what researchers have to say about issues like climate change, pollution, and poverty, the role of Christians in the world is to transform the world, to transform our mind-set, to transform our way of dealing with plants, animals, land, and nature in general. **Faith is the only transformative power that can actually make a difference in preserving the natural world.** Inspired by the

active teaching and global involvement of our Ecumenical Patriarch, the Message of the Holy and Great Council echoes what he repeats unceasingly: *“It is clear that the present-day ecological crisis is due to spiritual and moral causes. Its roots are connected with greed, avarice and egoism, which lead to the thoughtless use of natural resources, the filling of the atmosphere with damaging pollutants, and to climate change. The Christian response to the problem demands repentance for the abuses, an ascetic frame of mind as an antidote to overconsumption, and at the same time a cultivation of the consciousness that man is a ‘steward’ and not a possessor of creation.”*

Today is a new beginning. Let us use this fresh start to consider how we can be agents of change by converting our own hearts, listening to the melody of silence, contemplating the beauty of creation and strengthening the bond of love that unites us. Each one of us is a person defined by the ways we build relationships with God, our neighbors and creation, stepping out of the digital world that surrounds us and into the real world for which Christ gave Himself up.

I wish all of you, my beloved spiritual children, a blessed beginning of the New Ecclesiastical year as we all return to our local Parish Communities from our summer vacations re-invigorated and re-energized. I am confident that all of you will assist your Clergy with the various and important Parish Ministries so that Orthodoxy and Hellenism may continue to prosper, but even more importantly, be passed on to our youth and all future generations. Furthermore, I pray especially for all the children, youth and students of our Holy Metropolis who are returning to their studies, and in particular our College-bound youth, and wish them success, courage, patience and the abundant blessings of our Lord.

With Paternal Love and Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Metropolitan Evangelos". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'M'.

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