

GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

Pentecost 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 the Youth Organizations, and all devout Orthodox Christians of the Greek Orthodox Communities of our Holy Metropolis of New Jersey,

My Beloved,

"There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." (Eph 4:4-5)

This Encyclical for the Feast of Pentecost is dedicated to the historic event that is now taking place in Crete, the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church. On the occasion of this feast, which marks the descent of the Holy Spirit on Christ's disciples and thus the beginning of the Church's mission in the world, all of Orthodoxy will gather, represented by Primates and Bishops, and bear witness to our spiritual unity.

Before His death and resurrection, Christ promised to send to His disciples the Comforter, the Holy Spirit that consecrates the faithful, making them living stones of the Church. The same Holy Spirit was given to us after our baptism, when we were chrismated. Chrismation makes us a part of the mystery of Christ's salvific mission, fulfilling our ascension towards God, making us Church members and preparing our heart and soul to receive Christ through His Holy and Precious Body and Blood. Saint John Chrysostom wrote: "This Holy Spirit enlightens souls and sanctifies bodies. It was the same Holy Spirit Who descended upon the Apostles and filled them with divine wisdom."

What should we expect from the Holy and Great Council? According to the life of our Church and the experience of the Apostolic times, the Holy Spirit uses the voice of the Church's Councils to show us the communion between God and Mankind, as well as among Christians. The first message of the Holy and Great Council is that Orthodoxy is the Church of the living tradition, tied to its apostolic past but always looking towards the future, towards the Kingdom of God. The second message is that of Orthodoxy's consistent commitment to dialogue. The eagerness of our Church to engage in dialogue

is not limited to Christianity, nor to inter-faith discussions, but extends to the whole modern world. The Holy and Great Council will fulfill its spiritual mission to create mediation inside and outside of the Orthodox Church, conquering fear with peace, conquering fear through God's glorification. Third, the Holy and Great Council will signal the unity as communion which exists among the 14 Orthodox Churches through the world. It is a prophetic event for the world, to inspire humanity, to inspire its missionary vocation and to underline its role as a peacekeeper in an increasingly conflictual environment.

Once again, I would like to ask all the faithful of our Metropolis to pray for the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church. This is a historic event in the life of our Church and we should all pray for its success. Its success not only means reaching agreements on various ecclesiastical issues, but also showing that Christ gave His life for "the life of the world." Let us pray for the Holy and Great Council. Let us pray for His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, whose vision and mission in the service of Orthodox Unity is essential for the mystery of communion. By our common prayer we all become participants in this spiritual kairos as a way of glorifying the Loving God.

I would also like to remind you that we should not forget to celebrate Father's Day, to recognize what our fathers have done for us and thank them. We often recall that children are blessings for their parents. But we should also remember how parents are gifts of God to their children. The prayer during the sacrament of marriage reads: "for the prayers of parents confirm the foundation of houses." On this day, when the Holy Spirit descends on the Church, we should remember that everything is grace, everything is a gift from above. Fatherhood, biological or spiritual, should be treated as the gift that it is.

May this Holy and Great Council bring hope to the world, divinely inspired by the grace of the Holy Spirit, and may we journey together to our Lord's Kingdom with joy, praying for the salvation of the world.

With Paternal Love and Blessings,

† EVANGELOS

Metropolitan of New Jersey