



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

New Year 2017

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

“Holiness is proper to your House, O Lord, unto the length of days.”
(Psalm 92:5)

My Beloved in the Lord, Happy New Year 2017!

As we prepare to enter the year 2017, we should carry with us a spirit of prayer and thanksgiving for the many gifts God has granted us during the course of the past year. Each of us should also ask ourselves the question: during this year have I met the Lord? Have I given Him enough space to change me by His divine grace? Have I recognized the many prints He has left along the path of my life? We have tried, but it was not enough. We could have done more. We should do more, as our world has become a place of insecurity and uncertainty. But how?

Saint Paul wrote that anyone who wishes to work for the Lord will face many difficulties. But as God said to him: *“My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”* (2 Corinthians 12:9) So let us look for that grace, and consider what our Church celebrates today as part of the answer. On January 1st, our Orthodox Church commemorates the feast of the circumcision of our Lord Jesus Christ and the feast of Saint Basil the Great. These two celebrations may seem unrelated, but they express the same spiritual truth: there is no spiritual life without sacrifice.

Following the law of the Old Testament, Christ submitted Himself to the Jewish practice of circumcision, offering Himself as a sign of consecration. The Apolitikion of the feast reads: “Fulfilling the Law, of Your own will You accepted circumcision in the flesh, to bring an end to the shadow, and to remove the passions that cover us.” Christ’s

offering only increased during the time of His preaching, until His ultimate sacrifice on the Cross. *“And being found in appearance as man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the Cross.”* (Philippians 2:13) Life is given to us, as sacrifice turns it into the sacred mystery of love.

Saint Basil the Great, who lived in the 4th century, embodied this sacred mystery of love throughout his life, shaping our Orthodox Philanthropy by his monastic life and theological knowledge. His charitable program is expressed as a form of prayer in his Divine Liturgy: “Free those who are held captive by unclean spirits; sail with those who sail; travel with those who travel; defend the widows; protect the orphans; liberate the captives; heal the sick... For You, Lord, are the helper of the helpless, the hope of the hopeless, the savior of the afflicted, the haven of the voyager, and the physician of the sick.”

If we want this year 2017 to be worthy of God, of our Christian baptism, of the holy name of Orthodoxy, we must as a Church become to all, to each person who may need us, a vision of what mankind can be and what a community of people can hope for under God’s love.

May the gift of the New Year 2017 and the Grace and Blessings of our Lord be with all of you and your beloved families.

With Paternal Love and Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Metropolitan Evangelos". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The word "Metropolitan" is written in a larger, more prominent script, while "Evangelos" is written in a smaller, more delicate script. The signature is centered on the page.

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