



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

PASCHA 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

My Beloved,

ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΝΕΣΤΗ!!!

CHRIST IS RISEN!!!

The Christian faith is life, which is Christ Himself. As our Savior Himself said: *"I am the way, the truth and the life."* (John 14:6) Today, on the day of the Resurrection, these words are more powerful than ever. Life has become one person. The source of life has conquered death in a mystical battle recapitulating the whole of creation. However, to approach life, we must walk along the path of Christ. Along this path, we have seen temptation, despair, hatred, solitude, and weakness, to the point that every good seemed impossible, to the point that evil seemed to be victorious over life. But no! In the silence of the grave in which life reposed for three days, Christ was victorious, risen from the dead, celebrating the triumph of life. *"The Lord has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His Love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins."* (Colossians 1:13-14)

Pascha celebrates life. Let us sing, rejoice, be happy, love one another, and bear on ourselves the gracious seal of the Holy Spirit, thus becoming true disciples of Christ. Bearing witness to life is our primary mission. During the days of Holy and Great Lent, we struggled and prayed to God to grant us the virtues, as the symbols of the new life we receive today. During the Resurrection Service, we sing: *"Resurrection Day! O peoples, let us brilliantly shine! Pascha, the Lord's Pascha! For Christ our God has out of death passed us over into life, and likewise from earth to heaven, as we now sing unto Him a triumphal hymn."*

Our mission today is to offer the world everything that we received today. Our mission today is to make the experience of Christ's resurrection the horizon of our daily life. Our mission today is to embody what we proclaim with Saint Paul and sing during the sacrament of baptism: *"You who have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ, Alleluia."* In other words, how can we change our life into a life in Christ? Through Christ's Resurrection, the spiritual and the material worlds were reconciled. The Christian communities did not oppose the material world; they embraced the world and offered it to the Lord with thanksgiving. As Christians, we are fully aware of the life of the world for which Christ has given His life. The early Christian *Epistle to Diognetus* beautifully reflects on this original experience: *"In a word, what the soul is in a body, this the Christians are in the world. The soul is spread through all the members of the body, and Christians through the divers cities of the world."*

In today's world, where we are surrounded by an unhealthy fascination for sin and evil, the message of life we carry to the world is profoundly important. The spiritual strength we receive during these joyful days should be nourished by our participation in Holy Communion, during which we participate in the source of life and receive the Holy Body and Blood of Christ as the most precious gifts. For Saint Nicholas Cabasilas, the fourteen-century Saint, there is no life in Christ without the sacraments of the Church. They reactivate in us the mystery of the events we witnessed this past week: Christ's betrayal, passion, crucifixion, death and resurrection. This is how our union with God has been realized and is still realized in the Church waiting for the Kingdom to come, because Christ: *"is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living."* (Mark 12:27)

ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΝΕΣΤΗ!!!

CHRIST IS RISEN!!!

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, and "Evangelos" is written below it in a similar but slightly smaller script. The signature is centered on the page.

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