



# GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

## ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

GREAT AND HOLY PASCHA 2009

The 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 Communities of our Holy Metropolis of New Jersey

My Beloved in the Lord,

It is with the greatest joy and love in my heart, that I greet all of you today in the Risen Lord, Christ our God. Today we welcome and celebrate the Feast of Feasts! Our Salvation has been given unto us by the Lord. Mankind who so long ago was expelled from the Garden of Eden, because of our own sinfulness, has today seen the gates of Paradise reopened to all who remain faithful to the Lord. Our loving God sacrificed for all of creation, His Creation, His only-begotten Son so that we would not know death, but life everlasting, eternally walking in the *Garden* with Him.

Today My Beloved is a day of hope, a day of joy, and a day of Salvation. Today is the day in which we approach the empty and life-giving tomb with Faith and Reverence saying, “**Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen! Χριστός Ανέστη! Άληθώς Ανέστη!**” Today the prophecies have been fulfilled and the bonds of death, so deviously crafted by the enemy, have been broken asunder, the gates of Hades have been shattered and are no more! Christ came into the world fully man, yet also remaining fully God. He lived among us and put on flesh for our sake. For these reasons we have been saved from death. For these reasons we receive life. For these reasons we are able to rejoice.

The joy which we all feel in our hearts and souls on this most glorious evening is the same joy we should keep in our hearts throughout the year; in fact, each and every time we celebrate the Holy Eucharist, we celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord. In the life of our Church there are times which are turbulent, times which are joyous and even times which pass seemingly uneventful, yet we must realize that regardless of the situations that are on going in our lives and in the Church, our focus should always be on the Resurrection of Christ. We must always remember that this physical life is finite, yet we do not perish at the falling asleep of the flesh, for Christ has trampled down death, by His death.

We have passed through this Great and Holy Week – to recall the manner in which He has saved us, even the depth of His love for us. Words cannot express, nor can the mind fully comprehend His long-suffering (Eph 3:14-19): sojourning with His people, teaching them, curing their illnesses of soul and body, fulfilling their every need, and in return, was by them hung upon the Tree of the Cross, *the Tree of Life*, and in suffering, gave up His life for the life of the world. (John 6:33; Heb. 2:9-10) Wondrous is His love for mankind; wondrous are the mighty deeds of our God. (Psalm. 71:1, 75:1) And now today, having passed through the trials of His sufferings, we stand before an empty tomb, like those few women who went out to Him, and gazed upon the renewal of all things. Today we have gathered again to celebrate the Mystery of our Lord’s Pascha, for in His Rising He has truly passed over from death to Life.

Today the world is in disbelief, *“Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told this to the Apostles; but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.”* (Luke 24: 10-11), but we who remain faithful to the Lord, like the humble and blessed women at the tomb, remember His words. I exhort all of you my beloved, to take this message into your hearts, souls, and minds, indeed every fiber of your being, and as those women who were blessed to lay eyes upon the empty tomb we must take the message of life, not death, to the world.

My beloved, I cannot exhort you enough to keep the Light which all have received today, in your heart and souls. Do not treat this most glorious Feast of Feasts, the Pascha of our Lord, as a celebration of one night alone. Take this light, the light of Christ, into your homes and your lives, into the lives of your children, and allow it to illumine all of your actions and endeavors in this life. Do not fail to remember the Church after this morning’s most joyous celebration. Let us all stay strong in the Faith and firmly grounded in the Church, in Christ, and then we will truly allow the light of Christ to shine forth and illumine the world, giving glory to God. (Matthew 5: 16)

Let us be as the Heavenly Hosts who surrounding His Throne, and covering our faces and crying aloud, Alleluia! *“Before Him go the ranks of angels: all the Principalities and Powers; the many-eyed Cherubim; and the six-winged Seraphim covering their faces, singing the hymn: Alleluia! Alleluia!”* (Cherubic Hymn of Great and Holy Saturday)

**Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen! Χριστός Ἀνέστη! Ἀληθῶς Ἀνέστη!**

With Paternal Love and Blessings in the Risen Christ,

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.

† EVANGELOS  
Metropolitan of New Jersey