



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

Sunday of the Holy Cross, 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,

Greetings and peace unto all of you in the name of the Lord! Today, we have journeyed to the mid-way point of the Great and Holy Lent. The righteous have labored long and hard, and through abstinence from food, increased prayer, and the increase of giving alms to those in need, the difficulty of these labors is weighing upon our souls and bodies. It is for this very reason that our beloved mother, the Holy and Great Church of Christ, sets before us our hope and joy; that is, the Holy Cross of Christ our Lord and Savior.

The message that the Church is sending to us on this day is one of hope. It is a commemoration that presents us with a paradox, a paradox that can only be understood by viewing it through the Resurrection of our Lord, for in it we recall the painful suffering of our Lord upon the Cross, wherein He offered Himself as a pure and blameless sacrifice for the life and salvation of the world. Thus, while our minds are drawn to the great historical and sacred events on which the Tree of Life was re-discovered, and its sanctifying power demonstrated and reminded by the faithful through miraculous healings, and we do so with the utmost reverence for our Lord's offering, each of us training the eyes of our mind upon our own inward struggle, searching our heart for the presence of the Cross, and presence of the love of God within our own lives as Orthodox Christians.

My beloved, it is right and appropriate that we make this examination of ourselves again and again, for we are ever aware and watchful for the end of all things that must come, (1 Pet. 4:7) according to His good pleasure, and the powerful Throne of Glory before which we must all make an account of our journey and actions in this life. (Matt. 25:31)

The Cross is our hope for the sole reason that our Lord by it conquered death by death, and revived the Tree of Life through His Resurrection. The Cross is only a symbol of hope and power for the Orthodox Christian because of Christ. The Cross is the key to the door of the Resurrection of our Lord and our personal salvation. The Holy Cross is the joy of the world, the strength of the faithful, the staff of the just, and the hope of sinners, so that by venerating it

reverently, we might receive strength and the grace of Christ Himself. Receiving His strength and grace we can be assured of success for the final half of the journey of Great Fast. (Reading for the Day)

The Kontakion for the day tells us, *“No longer will death’s dominion have power to detain mortal men. For Christ went down and smashed and destroyed its powers. Now Hades is bound, and the Prophets in unison exult and declare: The Savior has appeared to those with faith. Come out, you faithful, to the Resurrection.”* It is for this reason My Beloved, that I encourage you to have faith and especially hope, relying upon Christ and the Cross, and casting aside the hollow and empty material things of this world. Praying that the strength and power of the Life-Giving Cross is always present in your lives, I remain,

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 than "Evangelos". The signature is centered horizontally and is overlaid on a background of a repeating, faint watermark pattern.

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