



# GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

## ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

### Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross 2019

The Very Reverend and Reverend Clergy

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

My Beloved in the Lord,

As we celebrate the elevation and universal exaltation of the Precious and Life-giving Cross on which our Lord, God, and Savior, Jesus Christ was outstretched in the single most self-sacrificial act in the history of the world, we are once again given cause for tremendous joy. Having felt the sting of death through the disorder of the first Adam, Christ puts death to death and offers us life through His precious and Life-giving Cross as the last Adam. Thus, in place of this sting of death, we are granted the remedy to death through the Cross and Resurrection of our Lord so that we may all attain eternal life. It is for this reason that we celebrate this day as we encounter not the method by which one was killed, but the means by which all of creation was saved.

How are we to understand the magnitude of human salvation through such a symbol of pain? How are we to comprehend the exuberance all creation experiences with such a figure of agony? How do we reconcile the paradox of the Cross as being the chief instrument of torture known to the world at that time and yet as being the gateway to Paradise? These things can only be explained by the fact that the Lord, in His overflowing love for humanity, willingly sacrificed Himself for all of us so that we might live in complete communion with Him. In this way, the Cross no longer holds this stigma of shame or agony, but has been transformed by our Lord's humility into a symbol of triumph and joy. The entire understanding of the Cross is radically changed when our Lord is crucified for the life of the world. It is in this experience of the Cross of our Lord that we come to realize and acknowledge that this transformed symbol now takes on a different meaning and becomes an integral part of our lives which helps to lead us in our journey to salvation.

We are blessed with the sign of the Cross when we are brought into the Church as a newborn. We wear the Cross on the day we are baptized and initiated as a member of His Holy Church. We make the sign of the Cross when we pray as a means to remember this ultimate

sacrifice which has borne the fruits of immortality through Christ. We see the symbol of the Cross in the Old Testament readings as it prefigures the saving passion of Christ. All people receive munificent blessings bestowed upon them when the blessing of our Lord is made in the sign of the Cross. This is precisely how the Cross and the crucifixion transformed the meaning of this most disturbing of symbols from something that deprives life to something that blossoms life. Therefore, we must give due deference to this most paramount of symbols within the life of the Church.

We must all wear our physical Cross and ensure our children wear their own Crosses not as a piece of jewelry, but as an expression of our faith and love for Christ. We must not be afraid to make the sign of the Cross in public as there can be no shame that comes from this most glorious sign of Christ's triumph over death. We must bear our spiritual Crosses as Christ endured his own Cross so that we may find ourselves worthy of His Kingdom. Finally, we must keep the Cross in the forefront of our spiritual lives remembering daily that, as believers of the Living God, *"If we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his"* (Rom. 6:5). Praying that you may be guarded and guided by the power of the Precious and Life-giving Cross, 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 smaller, more compact script, while "Evangelos" is written in a larger, more prominent script. The signature is centered on the page.

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



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Πρός τόν εὐλαβέστατον Ἱερόν Κλήρον,  
Τούς Ἐντιμοτάτους Ἀρχοντας τοῦ Οἰκουμενικοῦ ἡμῶν Πατριαρχείου,  
Τούς Προέδρους καί τά Μέλη τῶν Ἐκκλησιαστικῶν Συμβουλίων,  
Τάς Προέδρους καί τά Μέλη τῶν Φιλοπτώχων Ἀδελφοτήτων,  
Τούς διδάσκοντας καί διδασκομένους τῶν Κατηχητικῶν καί Ἑλληνικῶν Σχολείων,  
Τάς Ὄργανώσεις τῆς Νεολαίας καί ἅπαν τό Χριστεπώνυμον πλήρωμα τῶν εὐσεβῶν Ὁρθοδόξων  
Χριστιανῶν τῆς Ἱερᾶς Μητροπόλεως Νέας Ἱερσέης.

**«Ἐμοί δέ μή γένοιτο καυχᾶσθαι εἰ μή ἐν τῷ Σταυρῷ  
τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ» (Γαλ. 6, 14)**

Ἀγαπητοί ἐν Χριστῷ ἀδελφοί,

Ἡ Ἐκκλησία μας σήμερα, 14 Σεπτεμβρίου, πανηγυρίζει τήν Ὑψωση τοῦ Τιμίου καί Ζωοποιῦ Σταυροῦ, μία μεγάλη δεσποτική ἑορτή, πού μᾶς δίνει τήν εὐκαιρία νά ἐμβαθύνουμε στή θυσία τοῦ Θεανθρώπου «ὑπέρ ἡμῶν». Ἀτενίζοντας στό μέσον τοῦ ναοῦ τό ἱερό σύμβολο τοῦ Σταυροῦ, μέσω τοῦ ὁποίου ἐπιτεύχθηκε ἡ σωτηρία μας, οἰκοδομούμαστε «ἐν πίστει» καί ἐμβαθύνουμε στο μυστήριο τῆς θείας οἰκονομίας. Ὁ Τίμιος Σταυρός, ὡς σύμβολο τῆς θυσίας τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καί τοῦ δικοῦ μας ἀγιασμοῦ, ἀποτελεῖ γιά τήν Ἐκκλησία τό θεμέλιο πάνω στό ὁποῖο ἔχει οἰκοδομηθεῖ καί τή βάση τῆς «ἐν Χριστῷ» ζωῆς.

Ὁ ἀπόστολος Παῦλος δηλώνει γιά τό ἱερό αὐτό σύμβολο: «Ἐμοί δέ μή γένοιτο καυχᾶσθαι εἰ μή ἐν τῷ Σταυρῷ τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ» (Γαλ. 6, 14). Καυχᾶται καί ἐξυμνεῖ δηλαδή τόν Σταυρό τοῦ Κυρίου, καθώς αὐτός ἀποτέλεσε τό μέσο γιά τή σωτηρία τῶν ἀνθρώπων. Ἐνῶ πρῖν τή σταύρωση τοῦ Χριστοῦ ὁ «σταυρός» ἦταν μέσο φθορᾶς καί θανάτου, μετά ἀπό αὐτήν ἀναδείχθηκε σέ «θεραπεία τῆς κτίσεως», ὅπως παρατηρεῖ ὁ Μέγας Ἀθανάσιος. Αὐτός εἶναι καί ὁ λόγος πού σήμερα χαιρόμαστε καί πανηγυρίζουμε, παρά τό γεγονός ὅτι πρόκειται γιά θυσία καί θάνατο, νιώθοντας ἕνα αἶσθημα χαρμολύπης στή θέα τοῦ ζωοποιῦ Σταυροῦ, ὅπως ἐπισημαίνει καί ὁ ἱερός Ὑμνωδός: «Αὐτόν ἀσπασώμεθα τῇ χαρᾷ καί τῷ φόβῳ, φόβῳ διά τήν ἁμαρτίαν, ὡς ἀνάξιοι ὄντες, χαρᾷ δέ διά τήν σωτηρίαν, ἣν παρέχει τῷ κόσμῳ».

Ἡ κατάνυξη καί ἡ χαρμολύπη πού προκαλεῖ στήν ψυχή μας ὁ Τίμιος Σταυρός τοῦ Κυρίου μας, μᾶς δίνει καρτερία καί ὑπομονή γιά νά σηκώνουμε τόν προσωπικό μας σταυρό.

Ἡ προσμονή τῆς ἐπερχόμενης ἀνάστασης, ὅπως χαρακτηριστικά διατυπώνεται στόν Παύλειο λόγο «εἰ δέ ἀπεθάνομεν σὺν Χριστῷ, πιστεύομεν ὅτι καὶ συζήσομεν αὐτῷ» (Ρωμ. 6, 8), μᾶς ὀπλίζει μέ δύναμη, ὥστε νά ἀντιμετωπίζουμε κάθε πτυχή τῆς ζωῆς μέ αἰσιοδοξία, ἀλλά καί νά σταυρώσουμε «κατά Χριστόν» τούς ἑαυτούς μας «σὺν τοῖς παθήμασι καί ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις», συσταυρωνόμενοι μαζί Του μέ τόν ἀδιάλειπτο πνευματικό ἀγῶνα κατά τῶν παθῶν καί τῶν πειρασμῶν τοῦ Διαβόλου.

Ἡ μεγάλη ἐορτή τῆς Ὑψώσεως τοῦ Τιμίου Σταυροῦ ἀποτελεῖ μία ἀκόμη εὐκαιρία γιά ὅλους μας νά σκεφτοῦμε τίς ἄπειρες δωρεές τοῦ Θεοῦ στή ζωή μας. Ἄς στρέψουμε μέ εὐγνωμοσύνη τό βλέμμα μας πρός τόν Σταυρό τοῦ Κυρίου μας, τήν πηγὴ τῆς σωτηρίας μας, καί ἄς ὑμνήσουμε δοξάζοντας τόν «ἐν Σταυρῷ» ὑψωθέντα Κύριό μας Ἰησοῦ Χριστό, μένοντας στερεωμένοι «ἐπὶ τὴν ἀσάλευτον πέτραν τῶν ἐντολῶν» Του. Εὐχομαι ὀλόθερμα, ὡς πνευματικός σας πατέρας, «ἡ ἀήττητος καί ἀκατάλυτος καί θεῖα δύναμις τοῦ τιμίου καί ζωοποιοῦ Σταυροῦ» νά σκέπει τόν καθημερινό μας βίο, τίς οἰκογένειες, τό Γένος καί τήν Ὁμογένειά μας, καί νά εἶναι πάντα καί γιά ὅλους «πρόξενος ζωῆς καί σωτηρίας».

Μετά πατρικῶν εὐχῶν καί τῆς ἐν Κυρίῳ ἀγάπης

**Ο ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΤΗΣ**



† Ὁ Νέας Ἱερσέης ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΟΣ