



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

Charlottesville 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,

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). These words of St. Paul hold an immeasurable value both to our spiritual lives as well as that of our basic moral fiber as Orthodox Christians who believe in the One, True God. Moreover, these words help to express and convey the teachings of our Lord, God, and Savior, Jesus Christ, who called all to unity and to love one another.

The unfortunate and heinous violence that has taken place this past week in Charlottesville, Virginia is nothing other than the work of the devil who always seeks to divide humanity which is made in the image and likeness of God. Violence of any sort, no matter who initiates or perpetuates it, is to be condemned since violence has no place in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, the spreading of hatred and detestation based on one’s race, ethnic identity, or creed is condemned in the strongest of terms since it is contrary to the teachings of the Church. Every one of us is endowed with the gift of life and, as such, the gift of our personhood from the Holy, Consubstantial, Life-Giving, and Undivided Trinity. Thus, rejecting the value of one’s personhood based on these factors is tantamount to the rejection of Christ Himself.

Besides life itself, the greatest gift which we were given by God is that of our free will. It is our responsibility to use this free will to love others and, in this way, love God since He loved us to the extent to grant us this freedom and to offer us the gift of salvation through Christ. Therefore, I exhort you, as we seek to fully comprehend these tragic events, to continually remain focused in committing yourselves to living the Gospel of Christ and the

teachings of the Orthodox Church so that we may stand against any and all violence and discrimination whether it is expressed in word or deed. Praying that the Grace and Peace of our Lord Jesus Christ is with you always, I remain,

With Paternal Love and Blessings,

Metropolitan Evangelos

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