



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

September 1, 2019
New Ecclesiastical Year

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,

Today we commence with the beginning of the new ecclesiastical year, a celebration that is marked by renewal. This is a time in which we should seek to renew our commitment to our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ through a variety of ways. A new ecclesiastical year gives us a new opportunity to restore our spiritual lives by increased prayer, amplified participation in divine services, more engagement with our parish communities, and further dedication to helping those most vulnerable in our society. However, our focus should not be limited to ourselves or to other persons. Instead, the Church has also dedicated today to be a day of prayer for Creation.

The importance of Creation in Orthodox theology cannot be understated. It was through Creation that God expressed and shared His love. He created the entire universe not out of necessity or compulsion, but out of His own desire. His free will and love was extended to humans with the creation of Adam and Eve for whom He created the world. He charged humanity with the important responsibility of caring for the world, to be the *"priests of creation."* It is for this reason that we value and must act as stewards of creation. For Orthodox Christians the preservation of creation is not a political or ideological position. Nature's preservation is a theological imperative based in the incarnation of Jesus Christ and it is a practical reality since we have no other place to call our home other than this earth on which we live.

As we celebrate the beginning of the New Ecclesiastical Year, we are given cause to view this spiritual opportunity from a liturgical lens. This new beginning entails a new liturgical cycle of the Church in which we prepare ourselves spiritually through a variety of means, chiefly, our participation in the Sacred Services, above all, the Divine Liturgy which is the center of our lives

and is the apex of our faith since we encounter Christ through participation in the Liturgy and in the reception of Holy Communion. Our participation in the Church also includes other aspects which have significance as well such as participation in the ministries of the Church which offers us the opportunity to engage with both individuals inside and outside our own parish communities. Finally, but equally as important, is the importance of involving the youth into the life of the Church. Their incorporation into the life of the Church not merely through youth programs, but in all aspects of ecclesiastical life, primary among them, the Divine Liturgy, is paramount to making our parishes icons of the Kingdom of God. The presence of the youth in the Divine Services, GOYA, Hope, Joy, service projects, Sunday School, and the other wide variety of ministries provided is an image of God's Kingdom to come as they develop spiritually wholesome relationships with their peers. Let us always endeavor to involve our children so that through their participation, the Body of Christ can continue to grow and we may continue to spread the Gospel of Christ.

Thus, in celebrating the new ecclesiastical year, we have the opportunity to celebrate the renewal of the invisible and intangible spirit as well as the tangible and life-sustaining creation both of which are gifts from God. Let us not neglect the work which must be accomplished to renew and preserve each. Instead, let us approach this task with joy and with love as we seek to renew ourselves, our communities, and our world. Finally, may we seek to involve ourselves and our children even more so into the life of the Church so that we may give glory to God and thanksgiving for the gifts He has given us. Praying you, your families, and your communities are all blessed with an abundance of God's rich blessings this new ecclesiastical year, 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, and "Evangelos" is written below it in a similar but slightly smaller script. The signature is centered on the page.

† EVANGELOS
Metropolitan of New Jersey



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

Πρός τόν εὐλαβέστατον Ἱερόν Κληρόν,
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.

«*Ζῶ δέ οὐκέτι ἐγώ, ζῆ δέ ἐν ἐμοί Χριστός*» (Γαλ. 2, 20)

Ἀγαπητοί ἐν Χριστῷ ἀδελφοί,

Μέ τή χάρη τοῦ Θεοῦ, βρισκόμαστε σήμερα, πρώτη Σεπτεμβρίου, στήν ἀρχή ἑνός νέου ἐκκλησιαστικοῦ ἔτους, ἡ ὁποία ἐφέτος συμπίπτει μέ τήν ἀναστάσιμη ἡμέρα τῆς Κυριακῆς. Τό εὐαγγελικό ἀνάγνωσμα τῆς ἡμέρας, μᾶς ὑπενθυμίζει τήν ἔναρξη τῆς δημόσιας δράσης τοῦ Κυρίου, μέ τό κήρυγμά Του στή συναγωγή τῆς Ναζαρέτ, ὅπου, μεταξύ τῶν ἄλλων, ἀποκαλύπτει γιά τόν ἑαυτό Του ὅτι ἦλθε «*κηρῦξαι ἐνιαυτόν Κυρίου δεκτόν*» (Λουκ. 4,19), νά κηρῦξει δηλαδή τήν ἔναρξη μιᾶς νέας ἐποχῆς, δεκτῆς καί εὐάρεστης στόν Θεό. Ὅλη αὐτή ἡ περίοδος, ἀπό τήν Ἐνανθρώπιση ἕως τή Δευτέρα Παρουσία, ἀποτελεῖ ἕνα νέο αἰώνιο ἔτος, κατά τό ὁποῖο ἐκδηλώνεται ἡ πλήρης, τελεία καί ἀμέριστη εὐσπλαχνία τοῦ Θεοῦ διά τοῦ Μονογενοῦς Του Υἱοῦ, πού δέχτηκε ἐκούσια τή σταυρική θυσία χάριν τῆς σωτηρίας μας.

Ὁ Κύριος, μέ τή θυσία Του, ἐγκαθίδρυσε ἐπί τῆς γῆς τήν Ἐκκλησία καί θεμελίωσε τά ἱερά της Μυστήρια, ὥστε νά συνεχιστεῖ τό ἔργο Του ἀνά τούς αἰῶνες. Ἡ συμμετοχή μας στά Μυστήρια τῆς Ἐκκλησίας δημιουργεῖ μιᾶ σχέση προσωπική καί οὐσιαστική μέ τόν Σωτήρα Κύριο, χαρίζοντάς μας δῶρα ὑψίστα καί σωτήρια: πρωτίστως, τήν ἄφεση τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν, καθαρίζοντάς μας ἀπό κάθε μολυσμό «*σαρκός καί πνεύματος*»: ἔπειτα μᾶς ἀποσπᾶ ἀπό τά φθαρτά καί πρόσκαιρα τῆς παρούσης ζωῆς καί μᾶς στρέφει πρὸς τά πνευματικά καί αἰώνια: καί τό πῖο σπουδαῖο, μᾶς παρέχει τή δυνατότητα, μέσῳ τῆς Θείας Εὐχαριστίας, νά ἐνωθοῦμε μέ τόν Χριστό καί νά ἀλλάξει καθολικά ἡ ζωή μας, κατά τόν λόγο τοῦ Ἀποστόλου Παύλου, «*ζῶ δέ οὐκέτι ἐγώ, ζῆ δέ ἐν ἐμοί Χριστός*» (Γαλ. 2,20).

Ὅλοι οἱ ἄνθρωποι, ἀνεξαιρέτως, ἔχουμε ἀνάγκη ἀπό τή Χάρη τοῦ Κυρίου, καθὼς ἀπέναντί Του ὅλοι εἴμαστε ἀδύναμοι καί μοιάζουμε μέ «*κάλαμον ὑπὸ ἀνέμου σαλευόμενον*». (Ματθ. 11,7). Βασική προϋπόθεση ὅμως γιά νά λάβει κάποιος τή Θεία Χάρη, εἶναι νά ἔχει πίστη στόν ἐσταυρωμένο Ἰησοῦ, ὄχι διανοητική καί θεωρητική, ἀλλά καρδιακή καί ζωντανή. Πολλές φορές ἕνας μικρός πειρασμός ἢ μιᾶ μεγάλη θλίψη φέρνει στό φῶς τήν

ὀλιγοπιστία μας. Γι' αὐτό ὅμως ἔχουμε τὴν Ἐκκλησία, ἡ ὁποία εἶναι ὁ μοναδικός «εὐδῖος λιμένας», πού προσφέρει καταφύγιο καί ἀνάπαυση σε ὅσους προσέρχονται καί ζητοῦν τὴ βοήθειά της. Εἶναι ὁ ἐγγυητής τῆς ἀλήθειας τοῦ Εὐαγγελίου, μέσα στό ὁποῖο ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἀσφαλίζεται καί ὀδηγεῖται στή σωτηρία. Σέ ὅλη τὴν ἱστορική της διαδρομή, μᾶς προτείνει αὐτό πού συνιστᾶ τό αἰώνιο θέλημα τοῦ Θεοῦ: νά ἐμπιστευθοῦμε δηλαδή στόν Χριστό «ἐαυτούς καί ἀλλήλους καί πᾶσαν τὴν ζωὴν ἡμῶν».

Ἡ ἀνατολή αὐτοῦ τοῦ νέου ἐκκλησιαστικοῦ ἔτους μᾶς καλεῖ νά συνειδητοποιήσουμε ὅτι στή ζωὴ βρισκόμαστε κατὰ χάριν Θεοῦ καί ὅτι Ἐκεῖνος παρατείνει τόν χρόνο τῆς διαμονῆς μας, ὡς «καιρούς καί χρόνους ἐν τῇ ἰδίᾳ ἐξουσία θέμενος», προκειμένου νά ζοῦμε κατὰ τό ἅγιο θέλημά Του. Ἄς θέσουμε ὡς προτεραιότητά στή ζωὴ μας τὴν εὐθυγράμμιση τῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν μας μέ τό θέλημα τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὅπως ἐξάλλου καθημερινά αἰτούμαστε στό «Πάτερ ἡμῶν». Εὐχομαι ὀλόψυχα, ὁ Δωρεοδότης Κύριος νά εὐλογήσει «τόν στέφανον τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ τῆς χρηστότητός Του», νά σκορπίσει ἄφθονη τὴ χάρη Του σέ ὅλους μας, ὥστε νά ζήσουμε «τόν ὑπόλοιπον χρόνον τῆς ζωῆς ἡμῶν», σύμφωνα μέ τό θέλημα Του, τηρῶντας «ἐν εἰρήνῃ καί μετανοίᾳ, τίς ἅγιες ἐντολές Του.

Μετά πατρικῶν εὐχῶν καί τῆς ἐν Κυρίῳ ἀγάπης

Ο ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΤΗΣ



† Ὁ Νέας Ἱερσέης ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΟΣ