



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

Thanksgiving 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 gather together in celebration of Thanksgiving, an event which is celebrated nationwide by the vastly diverse people of this nation representing various backgrounds, traditions, faiths, communities, and nationalities, we are given a chance as a unified community of Orthodox faithful to reflect on what the meaning of this holiday in light of all that God has given us. Indeed, He has given us our families, our friends, our loved ones, however, we sometimes overlook the great gift that He has bestowed upon all of creation which is life itself. He has offered us the opportunity to live with Him eternally in His presence even though the Adam of old had disobeyed Him. Yet we should be giving thanks to God not only for these things which we have, but also the opportunity He presents to us for in a short few weeks we will be celebrating the incarnation of our Lord, God, and Savior, Jesus Christ, that is the new Adam, who He sent into the world for our ultimate salvation.

The overflowing love of God for us, a disobedient people, shows His bountiful mercy and his compassion. So, in truth, when we reflect on this Thanksgiving Day, we should reflect on how to show our thanks to God in light of these bountiful gifts. Our thanks should be directed to Him not only in thought and word as would be most common with prayer, but also in action since we are called to live our theology. The expression of our thanks should not be limited to mere reflection, but should be accompanied with our active participation in living our faith. In St. James' universal letter he says, *"What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead"* (James 2:14-17).

It then befits us to ask ourselves, are we answering the call of God? Are we recognizing that even the lowliest amongst us is a person made in the image and likeness of God? Though unacquainted with Christianity, the Native Americans fulfilled this Christian principle when

they provided food and safety to the newcomers to this continent even though they were uncertain of these newcomers' motives. So too must we have the same love for our neighbor though he may initially be a stranger to us. From the most exalted King of this world to the poorest man living in destitution, we were all made in the image and likeness of God and to ignore this reality is tantamount to denying Christ Himself. Thus, we must be prepared to encounter each person as a living, breathing, image of our Lord whom we must love not because it is easy, but because it is right.

Therefore, my dearest children in the Lord, I implore you to take this day and reflect on the gifts that God has given us. In God giving us our very being, He gives us the ability to love and to give freely. I wish you all a Happy Thanksgiving and I pray that God grants you and your families His abundance of blessings as we approach the feast of the Nativity.

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