GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

Archpastoral Message - May 18, 2020

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,

Χριστὸς Ἀνέστη! Christ is Risen!

I pray this message finds you well physically and spiritually, experiencing all of God's Heavenly Blessings as we continue to celebrate the glorious Resurrection of our Lord, God, and Savior, Jesus Christ.

As some states begin the slow and cautious process of permitting certain public areas to reopen in light of the recent progress made against the COVID-19 pandemic, we are filled with hope that we are slowly, yet eventually, arriving at the end of this most trying time. This is not to say that the end of the pandemic is imminent, but rather the progress made gives us cause to have cautious optimism that, God-willing, all of our Ecclesiastical Communities will be permitted to open their doors again in the near future. These months have been difficult especially for the devout faithful who have been yearning to attend the Divine Services, longing to pray in the House of God, and desiring to participate fully in the Sacramental life of the Church both with their spiritual presence and their physical presence. Although currently it is not the case, it is our most fervent prayer and our sincerest hope that the reopening of Ecclesiastical Communities to the devout faithful will be possible in the near future. In light of this, we must prepare ourselves both pragmatically and spiritually for when this day, God-willing, soon arrives.

For months the devout faithful have been unable to participate physically in the Divine Liturgy. The day is coming soon, however, when you will hear the resounding words of the Divine Liturgy, ***"With the fear of God, with faith and with love, draw near."*** I implore you all to inscribe these words on your hearts always. On the one hand, these

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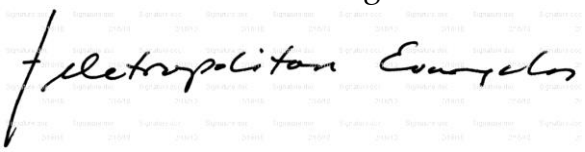
sacred words of the Divine Liturgy prepare us to receive the precious Body and Blood of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ. On the other hand, however, they take on additional meaning for us in these present circumstances. As we prepare to physically gather again soon for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, these words will serve as an angelic herald which calling all devout faithful to action. Having been distanced from your Ecclesiastical Communities for months, these words will inspire you to approach our Lord and, when called to Him, to not turn our face away from Him. Therefore, when the day comes that we will be permitted to safely gather together physically in united prayer, I encourage you to be spiritually courageous and draw near to our Lord in unwavering faith and unfettered love exclaiming, ***"Here I am, Lord"*** (Is. 6:8).

Though some people may feel trepidation in physically attending the Divine Services, I implore you to not allow anything to deter you from drawing near to our Lord and Savior so that you may experience the everlasting life He offers to you through His Divine Liturgy. For our Lord tells us, ***"I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh"*** (John 6:51).

As we patiently and prayerfully wait for the eventual reopening of our Parish Communities so that we may, ***"with faith and with love, draw near,"*** I beseech each and every one of you to encourage and to spiritually embolden one another. Though our Ecclesiastical Communities have endured much over the past couple months, let us be abounding with faith and love for each other and for our Communities so that when the doors of our Churches open again, we will be ready physically and spiritually to serve Christ and His Church.

Praying that our Loving Lord continues to guard and guide each of you and your families, I remain,

With Paternal Love and Blessings in the Risen Lord,



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