



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

New Year 2018

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

My Beloved in the Lord,

As we finish 2017 we are given the opportunity to contemplate the past year in preparation for the New Year of 2018. Often times people make resolutions thereby committing themselves to doing or not doing something that they believe will lead to them to being a better person. This occasion for reflection should not be limited to our external qualities, but should primarily be focused on our relationship with God, our relationship with the other, and our inner spiritual disposition.

The Church celebrates two significant feasts on January 1st which helps us to focus on these elements—the circumcision of Christ and the feast of St. Basil. Although some may be perplexed as to why the Church finds the former of these feasts to be significant, we must remain cognizant that it was not always the case in Church history when people believed that Christ actually became incarnate and took on flesh. This fact, which is most exemplified in the feast of the Nativity which has just passed, has extraordinary importance since it once again shows us that Christ has this intimate relationship with humanity insofar as He was born in the flesh and condescended to live that which was a culturally typical upbringing. It is one of the many ways in which He shows His humility even though He is God.

We also celebrate the feast of St. Basil who, throughout his life, exemplified what it meant to be in relation with his neighbor. He typified this experience through his theological works and personal letters which often show that he was strict on himself and those close to him, but to those who were spiritually weak, he remained pastoral. He also showed love for his neighbor and particularly for the poor by securing a return of funds from the empire for them when they had been overburdened by assessments. When this money was returned to the people, he devised a fair method by putting the gold coins in loaves of bread that were distributed to the populace which is where we get the tradition of the Vasilopita.

These two stellar examples of relationships—the relationship between our Lord and us and the relationship that we foster amongst one another—help to fortify each person's inner spiritual disposition. It is impossible to strengthen any one of these aspects of our spiritual lives without it

helping to strengthen the others as well. Conversely, if we neglect any of these aspects, it can also lead to spiritual infirmity.

My beloved children in the Lord, it is for this reason that we should all set spiritual resolutions for ourselves. If you do not already pray at least once a day, then your goal should be to pray at least once a day. If you already pray several times a day, then increase your prayerfulness by doing acts of charity. If you do both of these, then increase your prayerfulness by reading the lives of the saints for personal spiritual inspiration. If you already do all of these, then find other things which build your relationship with God and your relationship with your neighbor. There is no limit to the level one can devote themselves to Christ. Additionally, everyone should increase their attendance in the Divine Liturgy since this is the place par-excellence where one can receive the bountiful blessings of God.

It is my sincerest prayer that each of you find the way to build up your spiritual lives in this New Year. Praying that you and your families have a happy, healthy, and blessed New Year filled with every good and perfect gift from our Lord, I remain

With Paternal Love and Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Metropolitan Evagelos". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The word "Metropolitan" is written in a smaller, more compact script, while "Evagelos" 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