



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

Ecclesiastical 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,

We see in Holy Scripture, *“To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven”* (Eccl. 3:1). Today we recall an important celebration in the life of the Church – the Ecclesiastical New Year (the Indiction). The Indiction serves as an opportunity for a new beginning as we all engage in our spiritual struggle for perfection. It gives us an occasion to reflect on our spiritual progress and that which allows us to come closer to Christ such as our prayerfulness, love, charity, and dedication to our Lord. It also gives us an opportunity to introspectively look at our shortcomings as we strive to commit ourselves more to God and less towards these spiritual inadequacies which draw us away from Him. Thus, we come to recognize this most important time of year as a time of personal renewal so that we may better prepare ourselves for participating in the communal life of the Body of Christ, that is, the Church.

Our participation in the communal life of the Church is of paramount importance since it is an image of our participation in the Kingdom of God. Therefore, our commitment and devotion to Christ and His Church cannot be seen as merely an obligation to be fulfilled, but an opportunity to be an active participant in Heaven. This can be expressed in a variety of ways such as our presence in the divine services, our support of parish ministries, our active engagement with the needy, and our unceasing efforts to build the body of Christ through our own words and deeds both inside and outside the confines of the church building.

In today’s social climate, it can be easy to be apathetic towards the Church, believing that it is always someone else’s responsibility to accomplish the vital work that is needed for our parishes to function. Many people believe that it is acceptable to do the bare minimum for the Church or to give the bare minimum to the Church in order for our parishes to get by, but this

perspective is flawed. We should never be content in how much work or offer to the Church because Christ has always done more for us than we could ever imagine. We should never remain complacent about our ministries because there are always opportunities to improve our ministries so that we may better serve each other and our fellow man. We should never become apathetic so as to think “someone else will do the work of the Church, so I do not have to”. The reality is that every one of us has a responsibility for the success of each of our parishes, not just to the point that they may be sustained, but to the point that they should grow and flourish in success. This must be accomplished through every parishioner according to the extent of their personal abilities so that we may give glory, not to ourselves, but to God.

My beloved children in the Lord, we must strive with all of our ability to offer our time, talent, and treasure to the Church in a way that glorifies God and gives thanksgiving to Him who gives us the gifts and ability to offer back to Him what He has already given to us. We must recognize that giving to the Church or through a Church ministry is the ultimate way in which we actualize our active participation in the Body of Christ and, therefore, in the Kingdom of God. For our successes, let us celebrate together; for our losses, let us mourn together; For our challenges, let us struggle together; and for our difficulties, let us *“bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the Law of Christ”* (Gal. 6:2). It is my sincerest hope and prayer that as we embark on this new ecclesiastical year together, that we grow in faith and dedication to our Lord, to the Church He established, to each other, and to our neighbors. Praying that we recommit ourselves to these endeavors, 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 than "Evangelos".

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