



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

Feast of the Nativity 2013

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
Societies, 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,

Today, in celebrating the Nativity of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ, we not only celebrate the birth of God incarnate, but the very dawn of salvation. It was not in God's plan, however, to bring about salvation by a show of brute power as in the ancients' primeval understanding of authority. God did not intend to come into the world in a grandiose manner which one might consider as being fit for a king. Furthermore, He did not see fit that He should come into this world in a splendid fashion, free from the struggles of humanity. Instead, our God humbly descended from Heaven, took on humanity by becoming Man, by the Grace of most holy and co-substantial Spirit and the willful and divine participation of His most holy and ever virgin Mother, and all this, in a humble manger which housed His creations.

This is a profound reality in which we witness the love that God has for us as expressed by the incarnation of His Only Begotten Son, the Second Person of the undivided and Holy Trinity, the One Whom we got to know as Christ, our Lord, our Savior. My beloved, what God is so great as to allow himself to become man for our sake? What God is so great as to endure the struggles of humanity for us? What God is so great as to subject Himself to time and space and yet in his very essence is boundless and timeless? What God is so great as to condescend to our level only to be willingly crucified for our ultimate salvation? What God is so great as our God? It is overtly obvious that our God is not arrogant, but that He expresses His extreme humility in his incarnation which, in turn, becomes an opportunity for salvation and eternal life.

We are not, however, only given such an opportunity of salvation through the incarnation and birth of Christ, but we are also given the model of his life so that we may reflect his humility and love within our own lives as a means of salvation. For as

St. James says in his epistle, *"Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead."* Our ability to live our Orthodoxy through faith and works is vitally important to our salvation. The feast of the Nativity offers us a special opportunity to reassess our spiritual lives, both in faith and in works, in order that we may *"commit ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God."*

With these thoughts, my dearly beloved in Christ our incarnate Lord, that I urge you all to greet, live, experience and celebrate the feast of the Nativity of our Lord God, with utmost faith, love, and the outpouring of good works. Allow yourselves to grow closer to him through Him. Allow yourselves to experience greater humility by participating in his humility and being reborn with and in Him. Allow yourselves to work in the vineyard of the Lord by continuing the ministry that he has fashioned for us through the Church which he established.

I pray that you all enjoy this Christmas season with your families and we all be brought closer together as ONE FAMILY, as members of the SAME FAMILY, the Family of God Whose blessings and Grace I offer with much love.

With Paternal Love and Blessings,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Metropolitan Evagelos". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial letter.

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