



# GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

## ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

The Universal Exaltation of the Precious and Life-giving Cross  
September 14, 2015

The Very Revered and Reverend Clergy  
Esteemed Members of the Parish Councils, Philoptochos Sisterhood,  
Faculty & 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,

*“Rejoice, guide of the blind, physician of the weak, resurrection of all the dead, O precious Cross, who raised us up when we had fallen into corruption. Through you corruption has been destroyed and incorruption has flowered; we mortals are made divine and the devil is utterly cast down. Today, as we see you raised up in the hands of High Priests, we exalt him who was exalted in your midst, and we venerate you, as we plenteously draw from you His great mercy.”* (From the Stichera of Great Vespers of the Feast of the Elevation of the Cross)

Ever since the resurrection of our Lord from the dead, there have been attempts to deny the truth of His rising by deceitful means. Thus, the Jews, in those days as it is recorded in the Holy Gospel, gave false testimony concerning His resurrection, saying that the Lord’s body had been stolen by the Holy Disciples at night; they claimed the empty tomb was a forgery. Later, when Hadrian was emperor (117–138 AD) it was ordered that the place of our Lord’s suffering, Golgotha, and the place of His rising, the Holy Sepulcher, be buried beneath pagan monuments, as if the earth itself could erase those ever-memorable places, or deter the faithful in their prayer, (Ps. 43: 1) that one day, those places would again see the light of the day, so that all the world could come on bended knee to those places of universal significance.

These places of veneration would remain covered until our Lord established Saint Constantine the Great as ruler over the entire Roman Empire, and set the fire of zeal within his heart to discover His Cross. It is these events which we commemorate today: the uncovering of Golgotha and the Holy Sepulcher, the finding of the precious and most honorable Cross of our Lord, discovered by the pious hands of the blessed Saint Helen; and its elevation by Saint Makarios, Bishop of Jerusalem, in the year 326 AD. It is a commemoration of bittersweet joy, for in it we recall not only the joy at Saint

Helen’s discovery, but also the painful suffering of our Lord upon the Cross, wherein He offered Himself as a pure and blameless sacrifice for the life and salvation of the world. Thus, while our minds are drawn to the great historical events on which this Wood of Victory was re-discovered, and its sanctifying power demonstrated to the faithful through miraculous healings, we do so with the utmost reverence for our Lord’s offering, training the eyes of our minds upon our own inward struggle, searching our hearts for the presence of the Cross within our own lives as Orthodox Christians.

In all things we desire to be the friends of God, to live in accordance with the precepts of His Gospel, (Phil. 1:27) so that we might make claim to the salvation that He has generously offered to us. (1 Tim. 6:12) Our Lord has shown us the great friendship of His love first by offering His own pure body upon the Cross for the salvation of our own, (Eph. 5:2, 1 Pet. 2:22-24) and in return for this we must be willing to carry that very Cross, and to live for Him in all things without exception. And even though some may be unwilling to follow this narrow path, be assured, my beloved, that all of us are able. Let us strive after the crowns of victory that have been set aside for those deserving and faithful servants. (1 Cor. 9:24-25, James 1:12, Rev. 3:11)

Today our gaze is filled to overflowing with the Cross of Christ, our hearts overburdened with joyful-sorrow, our voices uplifted in prayer and hymn: on this day we have been called back to remembrance of these things so that we might make ourselves new again in the commitment to bearing this sanctifying Wood. Let our remembrance bear good fruit as we kneel before the image of His cross and as we rededicate ourselves and one another in this blessed New Ecclesiastical Year.

With Paternal Love and Blessings,

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

*To be read from the pulpit on Sunday, September 13<sup>th</sup> and Monday, September 14<sup>th</sup>*