



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

Nativity Fast 2014

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,

As we find ourselves approaching the Nativity of our Lord, God, and Savior, Jesus Christ, we are called to prepare ourselves for the coming of the Lord. We experience such a command when we read the hymnology of the Church from the Kathismata of the Sunday prior to the Nativity where we hear, *“Prepare yourself, O Bethlehem, for Eden is opened unto all.”* Here we are given a glimpse into the precise reason for which we are preparing ourselves for salvation. With the coming nativity of Christ as the incarnate Word of God, we prepare ourselves for something no other group of people in the history of the world has ever beheld; for God in the flesh is condescending to us not out of necessity, but out of choice; not in grandeur, but in humility; not to judge us with the condemnation of death, but to exalt us with the acclamation of life.

What kind of God is He who condescends for the salvation of a disobedient people? What kind of God is He who endures an incarnation and is subject to the pains and trials of this world when He need only stand afar from us? It is precisely a God of mercy and compassion who does this for us so that we might no longer be subject unto death, but have a renewed life with Him in His everlasting Kingdom. Thus, we are called to prepare ourselves to welcome our God, our King, and our Liberator from death. We are called to prepare and make way for Him who is beyond all understanding and yet draws near to us that we may comprehend His message of love.

Thus, I implore you, my beloved in the Lord, to prepare yourselves for this most auspicious of occasions since it is through the incarnation of Christ that we are enabled to partake in this experience of God’s continual salvation. The genesis of our Savior in the flesh is the genesis of our salvation, which leads us in a life-long process by which we are constantly in the process of being saved. It is for this reason that we prepare ourselves, physically and spiritually, through increased prayer, fasting, and philanthropic deeds, as well as, increased presence and participation in the divine services of our Holy Orthodox

Church, especially the holy Sacrament of Confession; for when do we ever lack in preparations in order to greet with an abundance of joy someone we love much less the Savior of our souls and bodies? Rather, we must prepare all the more to greet Him who offers us more than any Kingdom can offer us here on earth with its riches and glories that shall pass away since our Savior offers something greater- the Heavenly Kingdom with its never-fading comfort and joy of living in communion eternally with God.

It is with these thoughts in mind that I ask you to search your hearts as we progress in this nativity season so that you may prepare both your body and your soul, which shall be transformed into a manger which will house our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ who offers unto us an Eden reopened to a fallen, but redeemed humanity. May our Lord, whose nativity we are preparing to celebrate, bless you during this sacred Ecclesiastical Lenten period and all our lives.

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