



# GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

## ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

PASCHA 2016

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

My Beloved,

**ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΝΕΣΤΗ!!!**

**CHRIST IS RISEN!!!**

*"Come receive the light, from the never-setting light; and glorify Christ who has risen from the dead!"* Only yesterday, we were with Christ in the Upper Room. Only yesterday, we were with Christ in the garden of Gethsemane. Only yesterday, we were with Christ on Golgotha. But today, we are drawn into His glorious resurrection, and we are inspired by a divine joy that fills our hearts. We became new men and women, renewed by the sacrifice of infinite love.

We should no longer be afraid: let us become like Christ, since Christ has chosen to become like us, to be united to us. On this day of Pascha, we enter the doors of the Kingdom. As Saint Paul wrote to the Ephesians: God *"made us alive together with Christ, and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly place in Christ Jesus."* (Eph 2:5-6)

By our baptism, we are grafted onto Christ's resurrection. Not only do the three immersions of baptism represent our faith in the Divine Trinity, they connect us directly to the mystery of our Lord's death. The grace of this sacrament, which makes us Christians, is the same as the light flowing from the tomb. When Saint Paul commands us to *"put on the Lord Jesus Christ"* (Rom 13:14), he means to reactivate the grace of our baptism and the signs of our consecration by the Holy Chrism, offered to us as the *"Gifts of the Holy Spirit."* At Pascha we should remember why we are Christians, why we choose to follow Christ, why we have decided and still decide every day to carry the cross of our lives, following the Lord who gave Himself up *"for the life of the world."*

Christ's mission on earth started in the cave of Bethlehem and culminated in an empty tomb: the circle of life did not end, but opened onto the bright reality of the Kingdom. The Resurrection stands at the crossroads of time and history, but today the places that witnessed these divine events struggle to preserve and safeguard not only the monuments but also the unique spirit of the Gospel in the place where the term "Christians" was first used. Thus, *"remembering His saving passion and life giving cross, His three day burial and resurrection from the dead, His ascension into heaven, and enthronement at Your right hand, God and Father, and His glorious and awesome second coming"* (Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great), while we are filled with the joy of the Resurrection, we should also remember our brothers and sisters who are suffering in the Middle East and pray for them as the expression of our brotherly love. As Saint Paul wrote: *"But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection."* (Col 3: 14)

Today, we received the light of faith and joy. Let us treat this light with respect and honor. It was given to us freely, and freely we shall share it with our family, with our friends, with this world that lives in constant fear; a fear so vastly different from the fear of God, that is the root of *"wisdom."* (Pr 1:13)

I close with the words that Saint John Chrysostom, who so vividly lived the mystery of our salvation, ended his Paschal Sermon: *"Christ is Risen, and the tomb is emptied of its dead; for Christ having risen from the dead, is become the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep. To Him be Glory and Power forever and ever. Amen!"*

**ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΝΕΣΤΗ!!!**

**CHRIST IS RISEN!!!**

With Paternal Love and Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Metropolitan Evangelos". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**† EVANGELOS**  
**Metropolitan of New Jersey**