



# GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

## ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

Thanksgiving 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 Metropolis of New Jersey

My Beloved,

As we approach the celebration of Thanksgiving, an event that is celebrated nationwide by the vastly diverse people of this nation representing various backgrounds, traditions, faiths, and nationalities, we are given a chance as a community of Orthodox faithful to reflect on what the meaning of this holiday means in light of all that God has given us. It is easy to state the obvious that He has given us our families, our friends, our loved ones, however, we sometimes overlook the great gift that He has bestowed upon all of creation, life. He has offered us the opportunity to live with Him eternally in His presence even though the Adam of old had disobeyed Him. Yet we should be giving thanks to God not only for these things which we have, but also the opportunity He presents to us for in a short few weeks we will be celebrating the incarnation of our Lord, God, and Savior, Jesus Christ, that is the new Adam, who He sent into the world for our ultimate salvation.

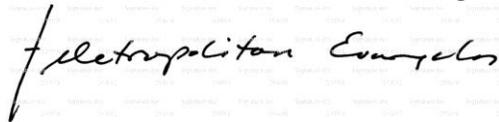
The overflowing love of God for us, a disobedient people, shows His bountiful mercy and his compassion. So, in truth, when we reflect on this Thanksgiving Day, we should reflect on how to show our thanks to God in light of these munificent gifts. Our thanks should be directed to Him not only in thought and word as would be most common with prayer, but also in action since we are called to live our theology. The expression of our thanks should not be limited to mere reflection, but should be accompanied with our active participation in living our faith. We see in St. James' universal letter where he says, *"What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead."* (James 2:14-17)

It then befits us to ask ourselves, are we answering the call of God to do that which we are all called to do? Are we recognizing that even the lowliest amongst us is a person made in

the image and likeness of God? From the most exalted King of this world to the poorest man living in destitution, we were all made in the image and likeness of God and to ignore this reality is tantamount to denying Christ Himself. Thus, we must be prepared to encounter each person as a living, breathing image of our Lord whom we must love not because it is easy, but because it is right.

Therefore, my dearest children in the Lord, I implore you to take this day and reflect on the gifts that God has given us, primarily that of our very being, and to thank Him not just today, but always by living our faith in thought, word, and works so that we may all come to know Him in his boundless glory in the Heavenly Kingdom. I wish you all a Happy Thanksgiving and I pray that God grants you and your families even more blessings throughout your 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 with a large initial 'M'.

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