



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

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

My Beloved,

“I am of Basil” or “I am of Gregory” or “I am of John”. These affirmations, explicitly related to Saint Paul’s rebukes to the Corinthians for their divisions, were at the origin of the feast we commemorate today. During the second half of the 11th century, people from the Eastern Roman Empire, in Constantinople, fought passionately over whether Saint Basil the Great, Saint Gregory the Theologian or Saint John Chrysostom was the greatest theologian. Saint Paul’s teaching clearly applied to this situation: “But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God – and righteousness and sanctification and redemption – that, as it is written, *‘He who glories, let him glory in the Lord’*.” (I Cor. 1:30-31)

Thus, the conscience of the Church recognized the important contribution of the three Holy Hierarchs as reflecting the one message of salvation. The common feast day they all three share today represents the liturgical expression: “Let us love one another that with one mind we may confess.” Love, mind, confession. The Three Hierarchs are known for their love, their intelligence and their faith in God the Trinity. They illustrate what a Christian should be, always at the border of this world and the Kingdom of Heaven, always inspired by the Holy Spirit to transform the world by the presence and manifestation of the Kingdom of God. Christianity and the life of the Church are a crossroads where we are asked not only to choose the good, but also to acquire perfection. Yet Saint John Chrysostom reminds us that “...perfection consists in not considering oneself perfect.”

Over the course of the years, the names of the Three Hierarchs came to be identified with the celebration of Greek Letters. This is not simply a cultural celebration. It acknowledges the work of God in Greek heritage, celebrating what Fr. George Florovsky called the “Christianization of Hellenism.” The encounter of Christianity and Hellenism has created a culture and a civilization which have inspired the whole world.

Today we should pay homage to Greek Letters with a two-fold joy in our hearts. We honor the richness of our past. Simultaneously, we celebrate the transmission of this spiritual culture to our children through the hard work and dedication of their families and teachers.

Through the prayers of the Three Hierarchs, Saint Basil the Great, Saint Gregory the Theologian and Saint John Chrysostom, may we all become the loyal witnesses of their teaching, in the spirit of sharing, openness and fraternity. May their love for inspired intelligence encourage us all to keep our eyes on “the glory of the Kingdom’s magnificence.” (Ps.144: 12)

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