



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

Transfiguration of our Lord 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,

"Master, it is well that we are here!" (Luke 9:33)

The Holy feast of the Transfiguration commemorates the place and the role of light in our Christian faith. To reach this light, we must climb Mount Tabor. Unlike the Mountain of the Skull, Golgotha, where Christ was put to death on the Cross, today's revelation manifests Christ's divinity. And once again, the reality of the Christian message is a profound paradox. Just as during Holy Week we contemplated God's death, a moment when the joyful outcome of the Lord's resurrection was as yet unknown, during today's feast it is the sorrow that the holy disciples are to suffer during the dreadful times of the passion that is hidden. One mountain mirrors the other. The glory of the first echoes the latter's darkness. Moses and Elijah will soon be replaced by two thieves, showing how the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies will go beyond the law, beyond God's commandments. From the meeting between Tabor and Golgotha remains only the sound of Christ's voice imploring His Father: *"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"* (Matthew 27:46)

The world has become darkness. From the same darkness in our churches, in the middle of the night, in the silence of the crowd, we hear the hymn *"Come receive the light, from the never-setting light; and glorify Christ who has risen from the dead."* We received the light on the night of Pascha, just as we received the confirmation of our faith at our baptism when we sacramentally and spiritually took part in the death and resurrection of Christ, becoming living stones of the Church. As Saint John the Theologian wrote: *"(The Logos) was the true light which gives light to every man coming into the world"* (John 1:9). Elsewhere in the same Holy Gospel, Christ says of Himself: *"I am the light of the world"* (John 8:12) Christ is the light, we are all called to become lights, like Saint John the Baptist who *"was sent to bear witness of the Light."* (John 1:8) We are

partakers *“of the inheritance of the saints in the light”* as Saint Paul wrote (Colossians 1:12) and *“the light of the world”* (Matthew 5:14)

Today, we sing the words of the hymn: *“O Logos, light unaltered of light, unbegotten Father, we have beheld light, the Father, and light the all-holy Spirit today in Your light appearing upon Mount Tabor, guiding with light all creation.”* (Exapostilarion) The divine light is not only the light of Christ, it is the light of the Holy Trinity forever present in the world, although we may not perceive it. On Mount Tabor, the three Apostles experienced a true epiphany, a manifestation of God’s grace, which surrounded them, as it surrounds us at all times, although it is not always tangible and concrete. Our spiritual journey during this Dormition fast should be one of prayer and fasting, one which will open our spiritual eyes so that we can recognize the density and the presence of God in our lives and start to live according to this certainty.

Because as Saint Gregory Palamas once wrote: *“Everywhere and in every way the King will be present, and everywhere will be His Kingdom, since the advent of His Kingdom does not signify the passing over from one place to another, but rather the revelation of its power of the Divine Spirit.”*

May this Holy Feast of Transfiguration bring you the light of joy, the light of grace and the light of hope that we need for our salvation, and may we continue our journey towards the Lord’s Kingdom, saying with Saint Peter: *“Master, it is well that we are here!”*

With Paternal Love and Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Metropolitan Evagelos". 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