



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

Exaltation of the Holy Cross 2018

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,

The Cross of our Lord has been a paradoxical symbol throughout history. For centuries it had been considered the most painful form of torture and execution ever devised while also being considered the most shameful manner in which to be executed. It was only with the crucifixion of our Lord, who humbled Himself to the degree that He would die in such a manner, that this symbol of death and shame became a symbol of life and victory. The Cross's significance and meaning was thus transformed through the death and resurrection of Christ for the rest of history.

The Cross also has taken on an added significance for every one of us who are members of the Body of Christ, for while we recognize that the Cross was the destiny of Christ, we must also realize that the Cross is our destiny too, albeit, in other ways. The Cross is our destiny because we are meant to overcome the difficulties and adversities through our faith and through our constant return to God for our sustenance and strength. By taking the Cross as our personal symbol, we follow Christ not only in His death, but in His Resurrection.

This does not mean that we all are called to be martyrs for the faith, but we are called to be ambassadors of the faith, continually expressing the love which had been shown for us by Christ through His voluntary Passion. We may not be meant to wear a crown of thorns, but we are called to be crowned in righteousness as we fulfill the Lord's commandments and become an example to our neighbor. We might not be crucified like Christ was, but we are called to crucify our egos and live not for ourselves alone, but for each other and for God. Our Cross will most likely be a different Cross than that of Christ's and it very well may be a different Cross than that of our neighbor, but it will

invariably be one that our Lord knows we can handle for we should not ask for a lighter Cross, but broader shoulders on which to carry it.

It is my sincerest hope and prayer that as we celebrate this feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross that we all come to recognize our individual crosses and that we continually ask God for the increased strength to endure. It is also my prayer that when we look upon the Cross or when we wear the crosses we were given at baptism, that we will see not a symbol of death, but the ultimate symbol of life and hope as we look forward to Christ's resurrection and our own resurrection as well. Praying that each of you are fortified in faith by the power of the most precious and life-giving Cross, I remain

With Paternal Love and Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Metropolitan Evagelos". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The word "Metropolitan" is written in a smaller, more compact script, while "Evagelos" is written in a larger, more prominent script. The signature is centered on the page.

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