



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

January 2, 2020

The Very Reverend and Reverend Clergy

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 Communities of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of New Jersey

My Beloved in the Lord,

The recent events wherein members of Jewish communities have been cruelly targeted and viciously attacked has both shocked and appalled our nation. These heinous and cowardly crimes have opened a deep wound which most have been trying to heal for decades – the wound of anti-Semitism. It appears, however, that the scourge of anti-Semitism along with its historic brutality has reappeared not in some distant land where cultures collide, but within our midst in a country epitomized by religious freedom and cultural melding. These unprovoked and unwarranted acts cannot be viewed as the problem of one particular community, but an infection affecting all communities. The members of the Jewish communities are our neighbors, they are our friends, and we stand united with them in declaring that hatred has no home here.

Our Lord asks us to look at each person as our neighbor. His example exhorts us to find the image of God in each person regardless of who they are, their race, their ethnicity, or their religion. The Lord spoke with the Samaritan woman and asked her for a drink of water at the Well of Jacob even though such actions were considered contrary to cultural norms. Our Lord expressed love for all people and treated them with dignity. So too must we show our love and support for all peoples and religious communities who are being targeted by persons filled with hatred.

Historically, we Orthodox Christians have marked our opposition to various forms of hatred and racism. We have long fought for and defended the religious freedoms and civil rights of our fellow human beings of different racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds. Our opposition of ethnophyletism at the Council of Constantinople in 1872, Archbishop Iakovos' historic and courageous march with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in Selma, Alabama, and the heroic initiatives of Archbishop Damaskinos of Athens are all examples in recent history wherein Orthodox Christians stood up against the forces of prejudice.

My beloved in the Lord, in this frightening era wherein we encounter new forms of aggression and hatred, ignorance and evil, violence and maliciousness, we must stand ever fervent in our resolve that peace is our language and love is our armament. We must remain determined that wherever and whenever we encounter these injustices we will not cower and remain silent, but we will confront this odious oppression and ardently speak out against this evil. Praying that God gives us to fortitude and strength to say and do that which is right and just in His eyes, and once again wishing you a happy, peaceful, loving and blessed New Year, I remain

With Paternal Love and Blessings,

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

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