



# GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS <sup>OF</sup> NEW JERSEY

## ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

Archpastoral Message - April 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,

I pray this message finds you all well physically and spiritually experiencing the Heavenly Blessings of God.

Even in the midst of the chaos which ensues throughout this nation and the world caused by the Coronavirus, I implore you to remain prayerful always. St. Paul teaches us to *“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks”* (1 Thess. 5:16-18). It is his exhortations, especially his exhortation on prayer, upon which we must remain focused since prayer can be tremendously powerful. In prayer, we can conquer passions, repel the temptations of the evil one, and, most importantly, communicate with God. Though we live in a society which has increasingly distanced itself from prayer, as Orthodox Christians we must be fervent in our prayer lives. Prayer gives us the opportunity to open ourselves to God and to place before Him all of our hopes as well as our fears, our thanks as well as our needs, our tranquility as well as our concern.

Especially in these uncertain times, it is not a sin to be anxious about the future. What we should be on guard for and prevent, however, is the illusion that we are falling into despair. We hear Moses speak about courageousness in the face of enemies in the Old Testament, *“Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the Lord your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you”* (Deuteronomy 31:6). We are presently in a struggle against another type of enemy, an invisible enemy. Still, we should not be overcome with fear and trembling, but rather we should pray to God for His merciful Hand to protect us and our neighbors against this invisible foe. We should not have fear since, although we are experiencing troubles in these present times, our Lord remains with us. As we see in the hymns of the Great Compline service, *“Lord of the Powers, be with us; for no other helper do we have in tribulations, but You. Lord of the Powers, have mercy on us.”*

My beloved in the Lord, as we continue to endure these stringent measures which have temporarily separated us physically, let us nevertheless remain in constant prayer so that we may be united spiritually. Let us never forget that there is no distance too far and no chasm too great which cannot be overcome by the power of prayer. Nothing can separate us from God or one another when we pray together with our hearts, minds, and souls. Let this be our comfort and our hope in the days and weeks ahead until we can be reunited once again in the traditional Eucharistic celebration together. Until such time, I implore you to pray together as a family and to recite the following so that we all may be united together in prayer:

**“Lord, our God, You who are our Deliverance and our Strength; our Rock and our Fortress; our Help and our Protector against all foes visible and invisible, be ever present with us, with our family, and with our community and grant us the fortitude to endure the assaults of this invisible enemy. Guard the physicians, healthcare workers, and all our civil leaders as they nobly and selflessly put their own health and lives at risk in order to combat the viciousness of this virus. Grant physical and spiritual strength to our clergy and all the faithful so that we may continually worship You and praise Your Holy Name. In Your love and mercy, grant healing to all those who have been afflicted so that they may return to fullness of health. Give peace to those who have fallen asleep as a result of this illness and comfort their families and loved ones in their time of grief. Be with them and with us in our hour of tribulation for You are our God, and it is only You in whom we place our hope, for blessed and glorified is Your All-Holy and majestic Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and forever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.”**

Praying that our Lord continues to guard you and that the Theotokos continues to protect each one of you throughout this crisis to its eventual end, 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 compact script below it.

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