



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

September 1, 2020
New Ecclesiastical Year

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

You, the Creator and the Lord of the ages, O God of all, truly transcending all essence, we earnestly entreat, that You will bless the year, and, O tender-loving Lord, in Your infinite mercy, only Master, save us all who worship and serve You, O our Redeemer, and who cry with fear, "For all Your servants, make fruitful the coming year." (Kontakion)

My Beloved in the Lord,

With the celebration of the New Ecclesiastical Year, we are offered an opportunity to conduct a self-review and to take stock of ourselves as Orthodox Christians. Whereas the roots of this feast's commemoration have not always been centered on the spiritual progress of the devout faithful, its history gives us a glimpse at how we are to understand this commemoration as Orthodox Christians.

The celebration of the New Ecclesiastical Year comes from the early Byzantine celebration of the Indiction at which time a new 15-year cycle would commence on September 1st. This allowed for a periodic assessment of the military and public works while also setting a specific date for the purpose of calculating taxes at the time of the harvest. The importance of recognizing this system became so significant that Emperor Justinian enshrined it in Byzantine law in the year 537 (*Νεαραί Διατάξεις*, 47). Thus, it became an indispensable part of Byzantine administration as it provided the opportunity for emperors and farmers alike to assess their progress and plan for the future.

In due time, the commemoration of the Indiction also became a prominent feature in the Orthodox Church as it signified a new spiritual beginning with the commencement of the new ecclesiastical year. Therefore, it offers us the same prospect for self-assessment.

In looking back on the previous ecclesiastical year, we can reflect on our spiritual lives and both our successes and shortcoming as Orthodox Christians. We must use this opportunity to ask ourselves, "What have I done right and when have I missed the mark? What mistakes have I made and how can I correct them? How can I better devote myself to Christ and to the Church?" Most importantly, we must be honest with our spiritual self-assessment while also committing to God that we will endeavor to do better in leading model Orthodox Christian lives.

By committing to devote ourselves even more so to our Lord and to His Church through its various ministries is of the utmost importance. Reflect on your participation in the Divine Services and push yourself to be more present in the liturgical life of the Church. Think about how often you offer personal prayers to God and try to strengthen that spiritual connection with increased prayer. Ask yourself about your past material support for the poor and for the ministries of the Church and then challenge yourself to do even more for the glory of God. Scrutinize your own spiritual life and ascertain where you are spiritually because what sense would it make to celebrate this feast superficially without taking any steps to transform ourselves for the glory of God?

My beloved in the Lord, we have endured an exceedingly difficult year filled with many trials and tribulations due to the Coronavirus Pandemic. Families have endured deaths, financial hardships, and other difficulties. Yet this is a time for us to reevaluate our spiritual lives so that we may reorient ourselves to God, thanking Him for the gifts we still have and entreating Him to show mercy on us. It is also a time when we must recommit ourselves to God's work and to the ministries of the Church as we endeavor to help people in need. Let us always keep the words of the Apostle Paul close to our hearts, *"Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ"* (Gal. 6:2).

Praying that our loving and merciful Lord blesses each of you and your families with all of His Heavenly blessings, granting you a fruitful New Ecclesiastical Year to come, 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 with a large initial 'M'.

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