



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

Pastoral Message Regarding COVID-19

March 17, 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 letter finds you all well as we continue our Lenten struggle and as we look forward to the hope the Resurrection of our Lord brings to each of us.

As a result of the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic, the faith of many people has been tested. Communities have been shaken to their core as they contend with the growing number of infirmed individuals. The psychological and spiritual effects have taken their toll as our nation grapples with a pandemic scarcely ever experienced in this country. In our present state of vulnerability, we are reminded that we depend on God for His intervention and His mercy. Since we depend on Him for all things, we must always remember to forge a continuous relationship with God.

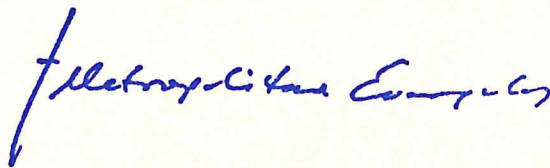
The period of Great and Holy Lent is marked in the Church by a variety of practices that help us to prepare for the feast of feasts - the Resurrection of our Lord. There are an increased number of Divine Services, an extended period of fasting, and a thorough period of reflection on our spiritual state among other things. Holy and Great Lent is also a significant period of prayer. Although we are called to pray every day to constantly keep an open communication with God, our prayer during Great and Holy Lent should be more intense and focused.

Consequently, I implore each of you to devote yourselves to increase prayer not only for yourselves, but for all people. Pray for those who are sick and for those who are healthy. Pray for those who have been affected by the direct and indirect

consequences of the spread of this illness. Pray for those who are suffering emotional tribulations. Pray for those who are spiritually weak. It is through prayer that we and those around us will be strengthened. It is through prayer that we will overcome these trials. It is through prayer that we will confront fear, oppose panic, and stand strong in our faith knowing that *God is with us*. Therefore, let us endeavor to pray more intensely as we petition God for His mercy and guiding Hand and so that, in our spiritual strength, we may be an example to those who continue to struggle with fear and panic in these tumultuous times.

Praying that God grants you all of His Heavenly blessings and that you seek spiritual strength in prayer, I remain

With Paternal Love and Blessings,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Metropolitan Evagelos". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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

This message is to be shared with the parishioners of each Parish, sent through the Parish email ListServ, and put on the Parish website.