



# GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

## ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

### Nativity Fast 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 in the Lord,

As we find ourselves approaching the Nativity of our Lord, God, and Savior, Jesus Christ, we are called to prepare ourselves for the coming of the Lord. We hear in the hymnology of the Church from the Kathismata of the Sunday prior to the Nativity, *"Prepare yourself, O Bethlehem, for Eden is opened unto all."* We are thus given a glimpse at the precise reason for which we are preparing ourselves – salvation. With the coming Nativity of Christ as the incarnate Word of God, we prepare ourselves for something no other group of people in the history of the world has ever beheld; God in the flesh condescending to us not out of necessity, but out of choice. He does not take on flesh out of grandeur, but in humility. He does not judge us with the condemnation of death, but He exalts us with the acclamation of life.

What kind of God is He who willingly condescends for the salvation of a disobedient people? What kind of God is He who endures an incarnation and is subject to the pains and trials of this world? It is precisely a God of mercy and compassion who does this for us so that we might no longer be subject unto death, but have a renewed life with Him in His everlasting Kingdom. Thus, we are called to prepare ourselves to welcome our God, our King, and our Liberator from death. We are called to prepare for Him so that in seeing his self-sacrificial love, we may use the freedom He gave us to do the same for our neighbor.

My beloved in the Lord, I thus implore you to prepare yourselves for this great feast since it is through the incarnation of Christ that we are enabled to partake in this experience of God's continual salvation. Let us prepare ourselves through increased prayer, fasting, and our presence in the divine services of our Holy Church. We should never lack in preparations in order to greet our Savior who is the savior of our souls and bodies. Instead, let us greet Him who offers us His love, His freedom, and His salvation.

It is with these thoughts in mind that I ask you to search your hearts as we progress in this nativity season so that you may prepare both your body and your soul for the coming of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ who offers us a reopened Eden for all of humanity. Praying that our Lord, whose Nativity we are preparing to celebrate, blesses you and your families throughout this season, I remain

With Paternal Love and Blessings,

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