



# GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

## ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

New Year 2019

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 embark on a new year, we are given cause to reflect on the previous year and to celebrate the beginning of 2019. Every year millions of Americans and millions more throughout the world make an endeavor to make resolutions and personal goals for the upcoming year. Often times these resolutions are based on external factors such as reaching a certain weight goal or saving more money. Whereas resolutions for the New Year can often be admirable endeavors, we sometimes neglect to set spiritual resolutions for ourselves which are of greater value.

First and foremost, when reflecting on this past year and assessing the new one, we must always give thanks to God for all of His blessings. He blesses many of us with health and with plenty for which we should not only be thankful, but we should also seek to share these blessings with those who are less fortunate. Some may have endured hardships and trials for which we should remain faithful that our Lord never abandons us and He will give us the strength that we need to endure. In further reflecting on this past year, we must acknowledge that we can always improve our personal spiritual lives. This personal spiritual improvement includes increased prayer, increased participation in the divine services, and increased support for our parish communities and almsgiving to the poor. It must be stated, however, that any attempt to enrich our spiritual lives must also include a desire to build up the Body of Christ, that is, our parish communities. This is precisely because it is in the context of community where we find the Kingdom of God expressed as the Body of Christ.

On first day of this New Year, the Church commemorates the feast of St. Basil who, through his works, embodies this call to build up the Body of Christ. St. Basil does so through his sermons on social justice which show us that we have a Christian responsibility to care for our fellow human beings regardless of their gender, age, race, socio-economic status, or any of the other factors. Through his example, we learn to truly love our neighbor. Throughout his

ministry, he showed love for his neighbors and particularly for the poor by securing a return of funds for them from the empire when they had been overburdened by taxes. The miraculous return of this money according to what the people had given by putting the gold in loaves of bread distributed to the populace is where we get the tradition of the Vasilopita.

It is with these thoughts, my dearly beloved, that I urge each one of you to set spiritual resolutions for yourselves. Start off with small spiritual improvements such as increased prayer and participation in divine services before gradually increasing your spiritual commitments. Endeavor to emulate St. Basil who was a staunch advocate for the poor by increasing your almsgiving. Thus, by setting spiritual resolutions, we will give glory to God and give ourselves a greater spiritual disposition. Praying that God continues to bless each of you and your families as you journey through this new year, I remain

With Paternal Love and Blessings,

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

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