



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

Thanksgiving 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,

About four centuries ago, our forefathers, finding themselves far from their homes in England for want of freedom, set aside a time of thanksgiving in appreciation for their safety, for their families, for their health, for the fertility of their fields, for their community, and for their faith which united them with God. This act of thanks to God is replicated centuries later as we gather around our tables with family in appreciation for the bountiful blessings we have received from our Lord.

The very essence and meaning of the word “*Eucharist*” means to give thanks. The Eucharist in the Orthodox Church is the time wherein we offer thanks to God for all of the gifts He has given us, but most of all, for the possibility to be in communion with Him through the reception of the Body and Blood of Christ. Our participation in the Eucharistic communion is the primary way in which we show thanksgiving for the gifts that God has given us and continues to give us. Thus, for us Orthodox Christians, the feast of Thanksgiving is not just celebrated on the fourth Thursday of November, but it is celebrated at every Divine Liturgy.

Our thanks should never be limited to one day a year, but we should, instead, constantly remind ourselves of the blessings we receive from God such as our lives, our families, our friends, ample food, clothing, housing, and our health. In recognizing these gifts with which we are blessed, we should also be cognizant that not all people are as fortunate to be blessed with all of these gifts that we so often take for granted. Therefore, it is in the spirit of the Eucharistic communion and the Thanksgiving holiday that we should focus on our neighbors who are in want of these basic necessities.

Much like the pilgrims came together and shared in the bountiful blessings of the thanksgiving harvest, we are called to come together in the context of the Eucharist to live as the faithful Body of Christ. This means that we are called to care for our neighbor no matter who that person is or what their religious background may be. We are called to feed the hungry, care for the poor, clothe the naked, help the sick, comfort the marginalized, visit the imprisoned, and love all people not because it makes us feel good, but because they are made in the image and likeness of God. Whether we choose to acknowledge it or not we are all responsible for each other which is exactly the way it should be because consciously or unconsciously we have made it so.

My beloved children in the Lord, it is my sincerest hope that as you gather around your tables today to offer thanks to God that you not only offer a prayer for those in the world who are hungry, sick, suffering, and oppressed, but that you and your communities take active steps in righting the wrongs of the world not out of coercion, but out of love; not out of compulsion, but out of freedom. Praying that God grants each of you and your families a blessed Thanksgiving with all of God's blessing, I remain

With Paternal Love and Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Metropolitan Evangelos". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M'. The text is centered on the page.

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