



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

The Nativity of our Lord 2016

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 of the Youth Organizations, and all devout
Orthodox Christians of the Greek Orthodox Communities of our
Holy Metropolis of New Jersey

**“Mary, why are you amazed and awed by what was done in you? And she answers:
For in time I have brought forth a timeless Son.” (Orthros, Kathisma II)**

My Beloved,

It is time to rejoice, time to share the light of life, time to spread love as the sign of our faith, time to be amazed as we behold the mystery unfolding in the darkness of the cave in Bethlehem. The mystery of our faith is entirely present, embodied by the tiny baby who overnight has become the center of the world, as God enters the doors of humanity. Mankind is amazed as reason encounters its limits. Faith speaks to our intellect and grace calls on our hearts to acknowledge the power of the living God, surrendered into the hands of a newborn. The essence of our Orthodox Christian faith shines with humility and simplicity. Today we welcome the true God and His infinite love for us. We welcome Jesus with the angelic hymn: “Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth.” We welcome the beginning of a new humanity, closer to the divine than ever before.

We are so used to celebrating the earthly birth of our Lord Jesus Christ that we too often forget our sense of wonder at this miracle. Life is a miracle in itself. But when the source of life enters life, it creates an extraordinary new reality in which things remain the same but are entirely different. It is the same experience that Saint John the Theologian had when he wrote in the book of Revelation: *“Now, I saw a new heaven, and a new earth... Then, He who sat on the throne said, ‘Behold, I make all things new.’* (Revelation 21:1-5) Our world seems to have remained the same, old, weary and crushed under the weight of the past. But today we are no longer under the old law, we

have been set free from the past through the body of Christ... Now, as Saint Paul wrote, *“we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.”* (Romans 7:4-6)

As we celebrate Christ’s glorious Nativity, let us reflect on the sense of wonder that we must rediscover. The same wonder that the Theotokos herself experienced when she held her divine child for the first time. The same wonder that the Magi experienced when they saw Jesus. The same wonder that we experience again today as we approach the icon of the feast, and which calls us to live with the joyful memory not of the past, but of the Kingdom to come, singing: *“The Father was well pleased; the Logos became flesh; and the Virgin gave birth to God who became man. A Star reveals Him; Magi bow in worship; Shepherds marvel, and creation rejoices.”* (Sticheron 2)

As Orthodox Christians living in a world which is deeply polarized and divided, it is our mission to offer to our society the genuine meaning of communion as community by seeing others, our neighbors, through the eyes of wonder. It is a similar wonder when parents meet their newborn for the first time, love their child at first glance, even though they still have to get to know him or her. Loving must come before knowing, although today all too often we know more than we love. Love is the free gift that we should offer the world, especially during Christmas time.

May the Joy of Christmas and the Grace and Blessings of our Incarnate Lord be with all of you and your beloved families.

With Paternal Love in our New-Born King and God,

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