



# GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

## ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

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

My Beloved,

Although historically the feast of Thanksgiving was not related to the Orthodox presence in our country, the value of Thanksgiving is intimately linked to our spiritual life. Today, we celebrate with abundant joy and gratitude God's many blessings in our lives. We thank Him for the gift of life that makes us, his unworthy creatures, worthy of the life and Kingdom to come. We thank Him for the gift of love, because, as Saint Paul said, there is no greater gift. (1 Corinthians 13:13) This is why on this day of Thanksgiving we try to surround ourselves with our families and friends. But we also should thank God for the gift of faith. Our Orthodox Christian faith in Jesus Christ as God and Savior identifies salvation with Thanksgiving. During the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, also known as the Holy Eucharist, which is the Greek word for Thanksgiving, Christ reveals Himself through the sacred gifts of His body and blood.

During the liturgy, the priest says: "We give thanks to You, Master Who loves mankind, benefactor of our souls, that even on this very day You have made us worthy of Your heavenly and immortal Mysteries." It is in this spirit of thanksgiving that I have asked for the Divine Liturgy to be celebrated in all of the parishes of our Holy Metropolis each year on Thanksgiving Day, or the evening before, so that we may honor this beautiful Holiday that brings together families in a unique spirit of love and fellowship.

Celebrating Thanksgiving every year is not only a social or even a family event. It is also the Orthodox way to adopt cultural practices and shape them by prayer and worship, and turn a national holiday into a spiritual reality. Culture lives and changes, and even secular traditions are threatened by global ignorance. When Orthodox Christians embrace a feast like Thanksgiving, they welcome that which in the diversity of cultures can unite mankind,

preaching hope and peace. As Orthodox Christians, Thanksgiving should become a way for us to bear witness to our Christian values in society by taking up a historical event and remembering the virtues hidden behind it. Today's celebration should allow us to reflect on our identity as Greek Orthodox and Americans, and to oppose the decline of culture by our renewed commitment to our faith. In this sense, we should surrender the feast of Thanksgiving into the hands of God in a liturgical gesture of true Thanksgiving. Today's feast would thus become a crucial milestone of the Orthodox mission in the world. Along with Saint Paul, let us express wholeheartedly our gratitude to Christ for the gifts of life, love and faith. *"Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!"* (2 Corinthians 9:15)

On this joyful day, I wish you all a Happy Thanksgiving. I pray that our Lord will continue to bless all of you with His great and rich mercy.

With Paternal Love and Blessings,

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