



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

The Feast of the Transfiguration of our Lord
August 6, 2008

The Reverend Clergy

Honorable Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate,

Esteemed Presidents and Members of the Parish Councils and Philoptochos Societies,

Faculty & 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,

Today we celebrate the great and sacred Feast of the Transfiguration of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us lift up our hearts and minds so that we can set our soul up to reach the higher things, leaving this mundane world, if for a moment, to contemplate the mystery before us. Let us be lifted up, in the radiant brilliance of Divine Light.

This Feast commemorates the events which occurred when our Lord walked among us on this earth, as He ministered and taught, revealing to mankind the purpose of His coming. At that time which the Father revealed to the Son, Jesus took the *“inner circle of the Apostles –Peter, James, and John”*, high up into the mountain and revealed to them His divine-self. (Matthew 17: 1-2) Christ was transfigured before them. Indeed His light shown forth, not as light exposed, when it is uncovered, rather the light pierced through the coverings, of flesh and clothing, which our Lord had condescended to take upon Himself. Together with the Transfigured Lord, both Moses and Elias appeared, affirming that the Christ was the God of both the Living and the Dead, (Rom. 14:8-9) the fulfillment of both the law and the prophets; not appearing as ghosts or conversing with Him as phantasms, but as friends and righteous servants of the Living God. That light which was witnessed by Peter, James, and John could not be contained by such coverings. That light witnessed to the light, indeed, Light from Light, True God of True God, not changing into something new or greater, but revealing, by means of Light, and announced by the Father, and the presence of the Moses and Elias, what He always was, is and will be, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. The nature of the Lord declared and proclaimed by the Father is told to us in St. Matthew’s Gospel, “...a

bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, 'This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; listen to Him.'"

The Holy Disciples of the Lord, upon seeing this mystery unfold before their eyes, were filled with such awe that they fell with their faces to the ground; (Matt. 17:6) indeed, this manifestation was of such great power, and radiated such light and holiness, that they could not remain standing before God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit; together with Moses the God Seer and Elias the Great Prophet. This brilliant Light which radiated forth from the Savior gave new power to their eyes, giving them spiritual sight to see things unknown. This is made clear in that the Holy Disciples recognized both Moses and Elias, though they had never seen them before. (Matt. 17:4) This new awareness which they possessed, this divine sight, though yet to be perfected, was a gift given to them for their participation in this glorious transfiguration, now having become partakers of the Divine Light.

Now as sons and daughters of the Living God, we too are invited to partake of this Light and the transfigured life which Christ offers to those who adhere to Him and the life to which He calls every faithful man. (Eph. 5:8) To do this we must set our hearts and minds on becoming holy, after the model of the Saints and all the righteous people who have done the will of God throughout every generation. (1 Pet. 1:15-16) Let us remember that we have been called out of the world, (John 15:18-19) that we are participants in the great mystery of salvation, and that we too are able to become Light-filled, according to the gift of adoption and inheritance, as sons and daughters of the Most High God. Today we learn that our Lord shines forth light by nature, for He is, in His nature, perfect in all respects; we shine forth light through the active participation in the Orthodox Christian life – through the striving of our hearts and minds to be conformed to the measure of the stature of Christ Jesus our Lord. (Eph. 4:12) Therefore, let us strive, and let us be of one mind in our striving, (Rom. 15:5-7) that together we may become like lights shining in the world, which is filled with the darkness of ignorance. (Phil. 2:14-16) In this way, as Partakers of this great mystery, we might become fully engaged in living the Life to which we have been called, as well as shining forth the light of Christ to all we meet, in all we do, to His eternal and unending Glory.

With Paternal Love and Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Metropolitan Evagelos". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The word "Metropolitan" is written in a smaller, more compact script, while "Evagelos" is written in a larger, more prominent script. The signature is centered horizontally and is positioned above the printed name of the Metropolitan.

† EVANGELOS
Metropolitan of New Jersey