



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΟΣΟΛΥΜΙΤΙΚΗΣ

December 25, 2011

THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD

The Very Reverend and Reverend Clergy,
Honorable Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Esteemed Presidents and Members of the Parish Councils, Philoptochos Societies, 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,

“And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem...to be enrolled with Mary...who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to be delivered. And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. And in that region there were shepherds out in the field...And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them and they were filled with fear. And the angel said to them, ‘Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will come to all the people; for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.’ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased.” (Luke 2: 4-14)

My Beloved,

Today we celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior. Today we celebrate the opening of the gateway and salvation is given unto us. It is our responsibility therefore to conduct our lives in a manner, which as the angel said to the shepherds, is well pleasing to the Lord. We do this, to honor this amazing gift of love, which Christ Himself, being the pre-eternal Word of God, took upon [the flesh] Himself, so that He could teach and impart to us His Gospel, so that we who are sinful beings and the fallen creation, would have a pathway back to Paradise. The Garden which man was once long ago cast out of, whose gates were sealed and guarded by the Cherubim, have been reopened by the very one who sealed it –Almighty God, the Word, Jesus Christ.

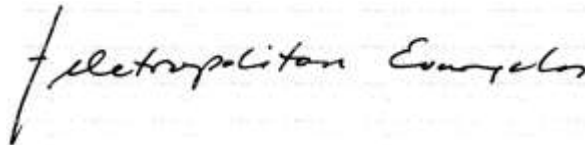
I urge each one of you to ensure that your heart is focused on Christ, not only on this day, but also on every day of our lives. Christmas has become a day that the world has offered to commercialism rather than God. We as Greek Orthodox Christians today and in fact every day, been given the Truth; as we proclaim in the Divine Liturgy after receiving the Holy

Eucharist, *"We have seen the true light, we have received the heavenly Spirit; we have found the true faith, worshiping the undivided Trinity..."* (Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom). As receivers of the Truth we must ensure that our lives are carried out in manner that is well pleasing to the Lord. We must allow our actions to witness to the world. Will we show the world that we care more about gifts that will eventually decay into dust? Or like the Wise Men (Matthew 2:11) will we offer our love and worship to God, thereby, showing the world that the True gift on Christmas, is the Birth of Christ.

My beloved we must also realize that through His actions, Christ has allowed us to be active participants in our redemption. Through the purity and obedience of a young virgin, our blessed Theotokos, we are reunited with our Lord. We marvel at the One who bore the Light, by which all of creation would be redeemed. What does this active participation mean for us as Greek Orthodox Christians? It means that we may cast off the yoke of death and bonds of slavery to sin, and as the Psalmist says, *"walk[ed] in my integrity, and I have trusted in the Lord without wavering."* (Psalm 26: 1) This means, my beloved that we are bound to Him and He to us. Christ is offering Himself for our salvation we have only to accept that offering.

I hope and pray that all of you have a most blessed Christmas and that the New Born King will continue to enlighten and strengthen all of you and your families during this most special and holy time of year. I remain,

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

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Metropolitan Evangelos". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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