



# GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

## ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

OXI Day Commemoration 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,

Today we mark the celebration of a day wherein our forefathers courageously stood firmly against the powers of fascism despite knowing that their opposition would be met with extreme pain, sacrifice, and likely death. When the people of Greece said “OXI” to the tyrannical powers of Italy’s Mussolini and Germany’s Hitler, they sent shock waves throughout the world as they fearlessly stood up to these powers which proved to be a sign of hope for the allies and a symbol of resistance against these evil powers.

Outnumbered in soldiers, weapons, and military assets it seemed that the Greek people would easily be defeated against these seemingly superior forces. The unseen weapon, however, is often the deadliest. In the case of the Greek people it was their bravery. In their love for freedom, they beat the Italian army and held back the German army enough to lend the critical time the allies needed to regroup. This expression of bravery and selflessness came at a cost, however, as about 10% of the Greek population perished due to direct effects of the war. Men died in combat, women and children died of starvation, Jewish neighbors were sent to concentration camps, and clergy were executed for protecting those who were being persecuted. Archbishop Damaskinos of Athens, recognizing the image and likeness that each person possessed regardless of their religious beliefs, risked his own life by protecting the Jewish population in Athens from their deportation and extermination in Nazi concentration camps.

The Greek people’s actions proved not just to be out of pride for their own sovereignty, but also as an expression that no one’s freedom should be threatened. In them saying “NO” to Italy on October 28<sup>th</sup>, 1940 they furthered the cause of freedom even though it would come with costly sacrifice. Much in the same way, we as Orthodox Christians have been endowed with freedom by God so that we may exercise this freedom not for our own selfish pleasure, but for the sake of other people. Our freedom when used to help others is the ultimate expression of love. It is this same gift of freedom

that both helped our ancestors to discern their actions and overcome those difficult years during World War II that helps us today to discern right from wrong, good from evil, justice from injustice, peace from war, and love from hate. This gift of freedom from God is not just a gift we must cherish for ourselves, but it is also a gift we must preserve for others.

Thus, in our commemoration of OXI Day, let us honor the sacrifice of our ancestors, let us pray for those who stood up and said "NO" on October 28 and let us celebrate their courage with which they defended freedom in the name of God and of peace as we continually seek to honor their sacrifice by preserving the integrity of our generation by exhibiting the same resolve they displayed. Praying that Almighty God continues to bless our beloved Homeland as well as all peoples who respect and cherish freedom, I remain,

With Paternal Love and Blessings,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Metropolitan Evangelos". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. It is surrounded by a grid of small, faint text that appears to be a placeholder or a watermark, consisting of the words "Signature.doc" and the date "21/01/0" repeated in a grid pattern.

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