



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

Three Hierarchs 2017

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

**“Let all of us who are enamored of their words come together and sing hymns to
honor them. For they are ever interceding with the Trinity on our behalf.”**

(Apolytikion)

My Beloved,

Today our Holy Church celebrates the memory of our Fathers among the Saints, great Ecumenical Teachers and Hierarchs, Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian and John Chrysostom. According to the teaching of our Orthodox Church, no saint should be considered higher than another. This is why in the 11th century, a joint feast was established in order to end dissension among Christians in the imperial city of Constantinople. By proclaiming the Synaxis of the three Hierarchs we are taught once again that unity should be at the heart of every liturgical celebration.

As Orthodox Christians, our Church life is marked by a series of steps celebrating this spiritual unity. By our baptism, we are united to Christ's resurrection. By our chrismation, we are bound by the grace of the Holy Spirit. By receiving Holy Communion, we become partakers of God's grace given for *“the life of the world”*. By the sacrament of confession, we are reconciled with the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. During the sacrament of Marriage, the mystery of the relationship between Christ and His Church is embodied by the new married couple. Union and unity are reasons for spiritual joy and celebration. It is important to reflect on this aspect of today's feast, as we collectively proclaim the memory of the most influential Church Fathers.

Progressively, the memory of the three Hierarchs was associated with the Greek Letters. They do not simply represent the state of philosophy and theology during the 4th century; they also represent a crucial aspect of the relationship between faith and reason. Particularly in our society, with its materialistic way of thinking, faith is often said to be incompatible with reason, and even more so with scientific knowledge. But as Saint John Chrysostom once wrote: *“Some, who seek out everything by reasoning, turn aside from the faith; but reasoning produces shipwreck, while faith is a safe ship. For where there is no faith, there is no knowledge; when anything springs from our reasoning, it is not (true) knowledge.”* Although God is a mystery which the seed of faith has planted in our hearts, at the same time God illuminates our reason and encourages us to search for truth in the rational, as well as in the spiritual worlds. The three Holy Hierarchs teach us that the protection of the faith comes with a deep love for wisdom, as well as for the transmission of this wisdom. For Church and school go together. In the history of the Orthodox Church, especially at the time of the Ottoman Empire, the Churches were the main institutions which provided education. They were known as the *krypha scholia*, as “secret schools.”

As your Metropolitan and Spiritual Father, I wholeheartedly encourage parents to expose our youth as much as possible to their rich cultural and spiritual tradition, which is their personal legacy to them. I would also like to acknowledge the wonderful work done in our schools by talented teachers who work with dedication and perseverance. Through the prayers of the Three Hierarchs, Saint Basil the Great, Saint Gregory the Theologian and Saint John Chrysostom, may we all become the true followers of their life and teaching, in the spirit of unity, communion and charity. May their commitment for a culture illuminated by the Holy Spirit encourage us according to the psalms: *“The mouth of the righteous shall meditate on wisdom.”* (Psalm 36:30)

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