



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

Transfiguration of our Savior 2020

The Very Reverend and Reverend Clergy

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 Communities of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of New Jersey

“You were transfigured upon the mountain, O Christ our God, showing to Your disciples Your glory as much as they could bear. Shine also on us sinners Your everlasting light, by the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Giver of light. Glory to You.”

My Beloved in the Lord,

Before our Lord’s crucifixion, He desired to strengthen the spiritual fortitude of His disciples so that they may endure the seeing their Lord put to death. It was for this reason that Christ ascended Mount Tabor with three of His disciples and, arrayed in brilliant light, He was transfigured before them. The light which emanated from He who is the Light of the world was so bright that His disciples could not bear its radiance. In the same moment, a voice came from heaven saying, *“This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him”* (Matt. 17:5). Christ’s appearance as light indicated what He has already proclaimed to us, that *“I am the Light of the world”* (John 8:12) and that *“If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him”* (John 11:9-10).

The Transfiguration of our Lord and Savior was not meant to give spiritual courage exclusively to His disciples, but it was meant to provide us with spiritual strength as well. It is for this reason that light is so central to ours lives as Orthodox Christians. The Fathers of the Church recognized this when they explained the relationship between the Father and the co-eternal Son of God as *“...Light of Light, true God of true God.”* Our Lord permitted His uncreated light to forever become for us the symbol by which we follow our Orthodox faith. When we are initiated into the Body of

Christ through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism and Chrismation, the light of Christ precedes us as a reminder that with every step we take, we are to follow our Lord. When we enter the Church, we light a candle to help us remain cognizant that the light of Christ is forever instilled in our hearts as we prayerfully entreat Him to hear our prayers. When a couple take their first steps as husband and wife, they hold candles to remind them that they are to keep Christ at the center of their marriage. Most significantly, on Holy Saturday a singular candle flickering in the night is shared with all the faithful so that the people may proclaim and share the glorious news of the life-giving resurrection of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ. Therefore, let the uncreated light of our Lord's Transfiguration continually provide you with comfort and faith so that you may more earnestly devote yourselves to Christ and to His Church. Especially in the bleakness of these challenging times, never lose sight of Christ's light and keep His light before you so that you may perpetually follow the path that He has set before us – the path to salvation.

Let us not only marvel at the Transfiguration of Christ today, but let us also recognize that the Light which emanates forth from Him is also our destiny since we too are sons and daughters of the Light, remembering the words of St. Paul, *"You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness"* (1 Thess. 5:5). Therefore, my beloved, I exhort you to remain focused on the Light, that is, on Christ Himself so that He may perpetually lead you to salvation in every day and hour of your lives. I encourage you to go to your Parish Communities, to light a candle, and to experience the radiance of His Light offered at every Divine Service through the reception of His Body and Blood offered to us for the forgiveness of our sins and for eternal life. Praying that we continually strive towards spiritual perfection in emulation of our Lord so that we too may walk with Him who is the Light and Life of the world, I remain

With Paternal Love and Blessings,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Metropolitan Evagelos". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the text "With Paternal Love and Blessings,".

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