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Greek Orthodox Metropolis of New Jersey: Ecclesiastical New Year Encyclical



September 1, 2019
New Ecclesiastical Year

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

My Beloved in the Lord,

Today we commence with the beginning of the new ecclesiastical year, a celebration that is marked by renewal. This is a time in which we should seek to renew our commitment to our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ through a variety of ways. A new ecclesiastical year gives us a new opportunity to restore our spiritual lives by increased prayer, amplified participation in divine services, more engagement with our parish communities, and further dedication to helping those most vulnerable in our society. However, our focus should not be limited to ourselves or to other persons. Instead, the Church has also dedicated today to be a day of prayer for Creation.

The importance of Creation in Orthodox theology cannot be understated. It was through Creation that God expressed and shared His love. He created the entire universe not out of necessity or compulsion, but out of His own desire. His free will and love was extended to humans with the creation of Adam and Eve for whom He created the world. He charged humanity with the important responsibility of caring for the world, to be the “priests of creation.” It is for this reason that we value and must act as stewards of creation. For Orthodox Christians the preservation of

creation is not a political or ideological position. Nature's preservation is a theological imperative based in the incarnation of Jesus Christ and it is a practical reality since we have no other place to call our home other than this earth on which we live.

As we celebrate the beginning of the New Ecclesiastical Year, we are given cause to view this spiritual opportunity from a liturgical lens. This new beginning entails a new liturgical cycle of the Church in which we prepare ourselves spiritually through a variety of means, chiefly, our participation in the Sacred Services, above all, the Divine Liturgy which is the center of our lives and is the apex of our faith since we encounter Christ through participation in the Liturgy and in the reception of Holy Communion. Our participation in the Church also includes other aspects which have significance as well such as participation in the ministries of the Church which offers us the opportunity to engage with both individuals inside and outside our own parish communities. Finally, but equally as important, is the importance of involving the youth into the life of the Church. Their incorporation into the life of the Church not merely through youth programs, but in all aspects of ecclesiastical life, primary among them, the Divine Liturgy, is paramount to making our parishes icons of the Kingdom of God. The presence of the youth in the Divine Services, GOYA, Hope, Joy, service projects, Sunday School, and the other wide variety of ministries provided is an image of God's Kingdom to come as they develop spiritually wholesome relationships with their peers. Let us always endeavor to involve our children so that through their participation, the Body of Christ can continue to grow and we may continue to spread the Gospel of Christ.

Thus, in celebrating the new ecclesiastical year, we have the opportunity to celebrate the renewal of the invisible and intangible spirit as well as the tangible and life-sustaining creation both of which are gifts from God. Let us not neglect the work which must be accomplished to renew and preserve each. Instead, let us approach this task with joy and with love as we seek to renew ourselves, our communities, and our world. Finally, may we seek to involve ourselves and our children even more so into the life of the Church so that we may give glory to God and thanksgiving for the gifts He has given us. Praying you, your families, and your communities

are all blessed with an abundance of God's rich blessings this new ecclesiastical year, I remain

**With Paternal Love and Blessings,
† E V A N G E L O S
Metropolitan of New Jersey**

- Source: nj.goarch.org