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His Eminence Metropolitan Evangelos of New Jersey issues Saturday of Souls Encyclical



Saturday of Souls
June 6, 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 ofNew Jersey

My Beloved in the Lord,

In the Tradition of the Orthodox Church, the Saturday prior to the Feast of Pentecost is marked by a commemoration of all those who have fallen asleep in the Lord in the hope of the Resurrection. This commemoration, commonly referred to

as the Saturday of Souls is the final of four Saturdays of Souls during the year with the other three commemorations taking place during the Triodion period and during Great and Holy Lent. The specific commemoration of the departed on the Saturday of Souls is actually an ancient Christian tradition since the prescribed day for the celebration of memorials and commemorations of the souls of the departed has traditionally been
Saturday in the history of the Orthodox Church.

In commemorating the souls of the departed on this day, we are not randomly memorializing them. Instead, the Church is making a profound statement by remembering the departed just prior to the Feast of Pentecost. The Church highlights the fact that the souls of the departed still actively participate in the life of the Church and in the history of salvation. This is best witnessed by the fact that we commemorate the dead during the Divine Liturgy. Our prayers for the departed are not only expressed through the Memorial Services and not only in our personal prayer lives, but above all, in the commemoration at the Prothesis. During the Service of the Proskomide in preparation for Divine Liturgy, the Priest commemorates the living and the dead separately, however, during Divine Liturgy, these same pieces of bread which are taken from the piece that becomes the Body of Christ are reunited in the same chalice with the Body of Christ. Thus, the Church makes a profound statement by declaring that the living and dead throughout
the ages are present together in the Divine Liturgy and that both living and dead constitute the One and undivided Body of Christ.

It is of the utmost importance that we remember this fundamental aspect of our Orthodox faith especially in these tumultuous times. As a result of the effects of the Coronavirus Pandemic, people are separated physically from one another, but be mindful that this physical separation does not dictate our spiritual state. We may be physically separated on a temporary basis, but we are always united spiritually in the Divine Liturgy and once we gather again physically, we will be able to partake of the Body and Blood of Christ and be spiritually united with each other and with our deceased loved ones throughout the ages. It is imperative that we continue praying for those who have gone before us that our Lord be merciful to them and keep them in His eternal memory. Furthermore, **I ask that each Parish celebrate a Trisagion on Saturday, June 6, 2020 for the repose of the souls of the faithful Parishioners and of all people who have died as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic**.

As we remember all of those who have gone before us, let us also be mindful of our Lord’s declaration, ***“I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die”***

(Jn. 11:25-26). May His words continue to give us spiritual strength through His All-Holy, Good, and Life-Giving Spirit which He will send down upon us. Praying that our loving Lord sends His Holy Spirit to guard and guide you each and every day of your lives, I remain,

With Paternal Love and Blessings,

† E V A N G E L O S

Metropolitan of New Jersey

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