

Greek Orthodox Metropolis of San Francisco - Reflection for the Feast of Indiction 2020



Beloved Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

On September 1, our Church begins a new ecclesiastical year. We are given the opportunity to start anew. This sense of turning a page, starting again, is a much needed opportunity for us and our parishes. Most of us, I am certain, would like to have 2020 behind us. The Coronavirus, the loss of connection to our parishes, the economic struggles, the racial and political tensions, and now these devastating wildfires, have touched every fiber of our lives. While the calendar for at least the next few months will still read 2020, the new ecclesiastical year can provide a sense of hope in the future.

As you know, September 1 is the Day of the Protection of the Natural Environment in our Church. His All-Holiness, our Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, in his message for the day has written: "It is apparent that the protection of the common good, of the integrity of the natural environment, is the common responsibility of all inhabitants of the earth. The contemporary categorical imperative for humankind is that we live without destroying the environment." As I prepared this message, the fires are still raging in California, causing unimaginable damage and

loss. While the cause of the fires was lightning strikes, the destruction should make us consider all aspects of our relationship with the natural world around us. The choices we make for our individual lives have consequences on the natural world, and often have only accelerated its degradation. For a generation, His All-Holiness has called us to reflect on those choices and find new ways of living in a right relationship with the natural world.

The new ecclesiastical year coincides with a new year of ministry in our parishes. Typically, all our programs would be in their first weeks. This past spring, all our parishes responded creatively and quickly to the stay-at-home guidelines, and many programs just stopped. Now as we begin the New Year, we have had some time to re-imagine those programs and prepare to resume them, but the circumstances require new methods. In most cases, our ministries will be online, but in some places there are possibilities for gathering safely in person, as we have seen with the many outdoor Liturgies lately.

For these ministries to be effective, we must utilize every talent of our people to the best of our ability. Saint Paul taught the Corinthians that the Body of Christ has many members and all of them were necessary, no matter how small or insignificant they may seem. As Saint Paul wrote, "God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be." (1 Corinthians 12:18). Your parish, our Church, needs each of you to offer your talents to build up the Church, especially at this time.

My beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord, when we consider all that we have endured these many months it is natural to feel a sense of helplessness about the future. This is why we need our church and one another. Our Faith sustains us as individuals, our Church binds us as a people. We will be together again and that gathering will be an opportunity for healing. This new ecclesiastical year is the first glimpse into that day.

May God bless the crown of this new ecclesiastical year with His goodness and love! God bless you all!

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