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Greek Orthodox Metropolis of San Francisco – Reflection for the Feast of Indiction 2021



Brothers and sisters in the Lord,

On September 1, when the Church begins the new ecclesiastical year, we commemorate the day as the Day of the Protection of the Environment. His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew has championed this issue of ecological awareness and environmental healing for the entirety of his thirty-year ministry as our Ecumenical Patriarch. He has called us to repent and change our relationship to the created world to one that heals the damage already done and allows for it to be sustained and renewed for future generations. He has asked us to pray for the environment when we chant, “Corruption comes into being through thoughtlessness; therefore, take pity on Your creation and grant prudence, also granting to all reconciliation, salvation, and divine mercy.” (Aposticha, Vespers for the Day of the Protection of the Environment).

Over this summer, we have seen the effects of human disregard and

thoughtlessness for the natural world. Whether it has been the water shortages, the terrible heat waves, the fires here in the western United States and elsewhere in the world, our world is loudly calling out to us to become agents of restoration. What kind of natural world will our children inherit if this year is just a prologue of the years ahead? How many more fires or droughts must we experience before we come to our senses?

Our Ecumenical Patriarch has been challenging us to take action to work to restore the balance to the natural world – our only home. Thus, as we begin this new ecclesiastical year, our first individual act should be to pray for the created world, asking our Lord to give us the strength and resolve to work together to solve our ecological crisis. I would also encourage each of our parishes to offer the Vespers for the Day of Protection of the Environment, and in the coming days to offer programs to educate ourselves about the ecological crisis, and our Orthodox understanding about creation. Our parishes should initiate projects to clean and restore areas in their communities and to include ecologically friendly practices like recycling, solar power, and using biodegradable products.

This new ecclesiastical year begins when all of us are discerning the rhythms of our lives at home, at work, at school, and at church in light of this recent surge in the pandemic. Policies and practices seem to be changing daily. Finding the balance of appropriate church activity and safety against the coronavirus is our main priority. Each parish is responding to local situations and our Metropolis guidelines to the best of its ability.

The new ecclesiastical year always offers hope to us because a page is being turned where we can deepen our commitment to Christ and His Church. As Orthodox Christians, each day is a new opportunity to draw closer to Christ. But we are not meant to live as Christians apart from a community. There is an ancient saying, “You cannot be a Christian alone.” Through our fellowship, prayer, mutual support, and life together as Christians we grow closer to Christ as we grow closer to one another.

My beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord, let us take up the call of a new ecclesiastical year, to heed the call of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to care for the environment. Let us strive with each day of this new year, as we pray at every Divine Service, to commend ourselves and one another, and our whole life to Christ our God.

May God bless you!

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