



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS ^{OF} ATLANTA

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΑΤΛΑΝΤΑΣ

September 1, 2022

To the Reverend Clergy, Monastics & Deacons, the Parish Councils, Philoptochos Chapters & to our beloved Youth and Young Adults of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Atlanta:

My beloved Children in the Lord,

Beginning the first of September, I greet you with love and joy in the Name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, as I offer my blessings and best wishes for a happy and spiritually prosperous Ecclesiastical New Year!

As we continue to observe the ancient custom of beginning a new year at the end of the summer harvest, we see that so many other aspects of our lives begin during this fruitful season. Having taken time to rest and refresh ourselves this summer, our beloved spiritual children return to both their secular and catechetical schooling, as well as various programs for the benefit of their souls (such as HOPE, JOY, and GOYA). Similarly, our adult parishioners will find opportunities to return to their Bible Studies, and even our Clergy will come together this fall for a retreat that will offer both fellowship and spiritual knowledge.

In the Gospel reading for September 1st, we learn that Christ too, used the season of the harvest to announce the beginning of His Ministry. He entered the synagogue of Nazareth, and taking the book of the Prophet Isaiah, read, *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." And he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth.*" (Luke 4:18-22)

The words of this reading are so full, that we could talk about their promise of hope, of gladness, and of justice. However, let us instead imagine the wonder of the people who were able to hear the Lord—their Creator—speak words written about Him hundreds of years before He was born into the flesh! When discussing this very passage, Origen of Alexandria says, *"How much would I wish that this assembly gave such testimony. I wish that the eyes of all (of catechumens and faithful of women, men and children) - not the eyes of the body, but the eyes of the soul - would gaze upon Jesus. When you look to Him, your faces will be shining from the light of His gaze."*

My beloved Brother Clergy, my dear Laity—brothers, sisters, and children—may we begin this new Ecclesiastical Year as an opportunity to grow strong in the Word of God, in thought and in action. Only when we gladly receive the Good News, will we receive our sight, then becoming freer and richer in spiritual blessings. When we carefully study the Gospel and try our best to walk in its ways, we shall not only see Him with the eyes of the soul, but begin to live with Him, as He lives in us. May it be so, this year, and all the days of our lives, I remain,

With paternal blessings and with much love in Christ,

+ ALEXIOS
Metropolitan of Atlanta