



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

August 27, 2009

HIS EMINENCE METROPOLITAN ALEXIOS REFLECTIONS ON THE NEW ECCLESIASTICAL YEAR

My beloved ones,

As we prepare for the beginning of the New Ecclesiastical Year, it seems scarcely possible to me summer is already approaching its end. This is indeed an exciting time, as we return from our vacations and travels with a renewed spirit and strength to face all the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead.

Of course, in the eyes of God, today is the same as yesterday or tomorrow, for He is the Creator of time, but chronological time is still necessary for us, His creatures, so we have adapted our lives according to the seasons and cycle of His Creation. Even in our modern life, I think we are aware of the sequence of life with its beginning and end, though perhaps we are not as keenly aware of this ancient cycle, as our ancestors were.

The beginning of the new ecclesiastical year and the life of our Holy Orthodox Church is a living theology that communicates the reality that Christ is truly in our midst here and now. The cycle of feasts and fasts, worship, readings from the Holy Scripture, the commemoration of saints and martyrs, are a vital part of our spiritual journey. Thus our commemoration of the beginning of the ecclesiastical year must be more than a formality or a ceremony. It is equally important to reflect on how we choose to live our lives as children of God, because in our daily life we meet make many decisions, both large and small, that will affect our

futures. This is not something that we can put off for another day, or just hope will happen. Our relationship to God is of ultimate importance, and that relationship can be deepened and strengthened, if we are willing, with prayer, fasting, study of Scripture, attending services and availing ourselves of all the tools for our spiritual journey provided by our Holy Orthodox Church.

At this time of new beginnings, it also seems appropriate to mention that in many communities there has not yet been established a good relationship between the pastor and the parish council, especially using the guidelines for meetings that we have developed. I have seen that our recommendations to utilize the Education, Culture and Youth Diakonia Committees have also not been implemented. We have sent this information many times; however, if you would like to receive copies, or if you have any questions, please contact the Chancellor, V. Rev. Fr. George Tsahakis for guidance. My beloved ones, this is something that should not be delayed in implementation, and I look forward to hearing that all our parish communities are using these tools that we have developed for the improved organization and functioning of parish life.

As we reflect on our lives and the coming year, I encourage each of us to make the effort to invite people that we know who have fallen away from the Church or who are unchurched into our loving Parish communities, because this is what our Lord Himself has commanded us to do: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." I challenge each of us to make the personal commitment to do all that we can to ensure that all of our goals and dreams, both for the Metropolis and for our Parish communities, will become a blessed reality. I ask you to make the commitment to worship with your families every Sunday, to pray together, and observe the feasts and the fasts together.

In this way also, we will not only draw closer to God but to our

brothers and sisters as well, using the gifts that He has given us: joy, peace and love. In this spirit, I ask you to join me in prayer, that we may look forward confidently to the future, praying that the Lord will grant us the time to serve Him with joy and gladness and manifest the reality of His love and grace in our own lives.

Wishing all of you a blessed and peaceful New Year abundant in all the good gifts of our loving and merciful God, I remain,

Paternally yours,

+ALEXIOS
Metropolitan of Atlanta