



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

Virginia Beach 2019

The Very Reverend and Reverend Clergy

Honorable Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, 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 Greek Orthodox Communities of our Holy Metropolis of New Jersey

My Beloved in the Lord,

This past week in Virginia Beach, Virginia, our nation experienced yet another senseless tragedy wherein a gunman turned his wrath against his fellow man, taking the lives of twelve other people. When this heinous act took place we, as Orthodox Christians, were still celebrating the Resurrection of our Lord with the greeting “Christ is Risen.” It seems both strange and difficult to imagine that even in the midst of such pain we could still utter those mellifluous words.

Trying to make sense of the senseless is an impossible task. With the various mass shootings that have taken place over the years at Virginia Tech a few years ago, in Sandy Hook, Las Vegas, Orlando, and throughout the country including presently, again, in our very own Metropolis, we have always sought for an answer as to why these events occurred. Some people who perpetrated these atrocious crimes were mentally ill, others had experienced some sort of sudden breakdown, others still just had evil in their hearts. Whereas we do not know why this tragedy occurred, we do know at least one thing — God is the author of life, not death. In our capacity as humans we will never be able to fully rid the world of evil, but as persons who possess the image and likeness of our Creator, we do have the ability to effect change which prevents future tragedies from taking place and sooth the pain of tragedies that do occur.

My beloved, I implore each of you to not only pray for those who have lost their lives in this terrible tragedy, but to act. Be proactive in reaching out to those who may need emotional and psychological support. Be attentive to individuals who may seem imbalanced. Share the peace and love of Christ with all people. Finally, I ask that you pray a special prayer for the repose of the souls of those who lost their lives, that the Lord may receive them into His

Heavenly Kingdom, and that the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, may be sent down upon the families and loves ones of the victims to console them. May their memory be eternal!

With Paternal Love and Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Metropolitan Evangelos". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The word "Metropolitan" is written in a smaller, more compact script, while "Evangelos" is written in a larger, more prominent script. The signature is centered horizontally on the page.

† E V A N G E L O S
Metropolitan of New Jersey