



GREEK ORTHODOX
METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

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PHILOPTOCHOS

Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society 215 East Grove Street,

Westfield, New Jersey 07090 (908) 301-0550

December 2014

For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. Isaiah 9:6-7

Beloved Chapter Presidents, Metropolis Board Members and Philoptochos Sisters,

Under the Arch-pastoral Ministry of His Eminence Metropolitan Evangelos of New Jersey, I greet you with love in the name of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This is a most wonderful and busy time of year, as we prepare to celebrate with family and friends the Miracle of His Birth. Let us all reflect on the blessings that have come to each and every one of us through this Miracle. On behalf of the Metropolis of New Jersey Philoptochos Board of Directors I extend my deepest gratitude, love and admiration for your steadfast as Sisters in Philoptochos.

As we consider the Miracle of the Nativity let us reflect on the words of St. Gregory Palamas (1296-1359).

"The pre-eternal, uncircumscribed (without limits), and almighty Word is now born according to the flesh - without home, without shelter, without dwelling - and placed as a babe in the manger - seen by men's eyes, touched by their hands and wrapped in layers of swaddling bands.

He is not a spiritual creature coming into being after previously not existing, nor flesh which is brought to birth but will soon perish, nor flesh and mind united to form a rational creature; but He is God and flesh - mingled without confusion by the divine Mind...Who entered the Virgin's womb for a time.

By the good pleasure of the Father and the cooperation of the Spirit: The Word, Who transcends being, came into being within this womb and by means of it, and now He is delivered from it and born as an Infant - not losing, but preserving the signs of virginity."

"He is born without suffering, as He was conceived without passion; for His mother was shown to be above the pleasure of passion when she conceived, so she is above grievous pains when she gives birth. "Before she was in labor, she gave birth; before her pain came, she delivered a male child", as Isaiah says [Isa. 66:7], and she brought forth in the flesh the Pre-eternal Word.

Not only is His divinity inscrutable, but the manner in which He was united with flesh is past understanding. His condescension unsurpassable. And the human nature he assumed: divinely, ineffably sublime; and so far above all thought and speech that it does not admit of any comparison with creation. Even though you see in the flesh the Child born to the Maiden who knew no husband, He is still beyond compare.

As we await the Birth of Christ, we become more keenly aware of the incredible nature of the Miracle that is His Birth and the blessings brought about by this Gift. The words of St. Gregory Palamas are very deep and thought provoking but they truly express the great mystery that is the Incarnation of Our Lord.

This year, which continues to be challenging for many, the hope for salvation and rescue is once again found in our faith, which is rooted in our worship of Him. It serves as an answer offered to those who have found themselves in the direct path of disaster. It serves as a path to healing, offered to those who have found themselves saying goodbye to a loved one

after an agonizing struggle with illness. It serves as an offering of strength to all of us, as we find ourselves seeking the will to continue to offer our gifts of love, hope and charity to humankind.

Let us celebrate the Christmas Miracle while thinking about the needs of others. Let us pray for God's eternal love and blessings to be upon the needy that day in particular. Let us find the depth of our faith and commitment in the awesome Miracle of the Nativity, mysterious as it is.

The Metropolis of New Jersey Philoptochos thanks all of you for exhibiting the understanding of your faith throughout the challenges we faced, both together and separately, this past year. It is our fervent prayer that you continue to open your hearts to those in the midst of struggle, no matter where and when you see it. As you give of yourself you will truly feel the blessings of the Gift, the Nativity of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ now and throughout the New Year.

With love in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Anastasia Michals". The ink is dark and the signature is written in a fluid, connected style.

Anastasia Michals, President