



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

May 23, 2018

To the Reverend Clergy, Esteemed Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Members of the Metropolis and Parish Councils, the Philoptochos Sisterhoods and the devoted Greek Orthodox Faithful of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of New Jersey

My Beloved in the Lord,

This past Saturday, the joyous 2018 Commencement Exercise and celebrations of our beloved Hellenic College and Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology were marred when one of the invited speakers, Mr. Efstathios Valiotis, the recipient of an “Honorary Doctorate,” from our School, took the opportunity to slander our Mother Church, the Holy Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. And this, while he was expressing his “gratitude” for the high honor bestowed upon him by one of the flagship institutions of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America and, by extension, of the Ecumenical Patriarchate itself. It is here, at this sacred venue, this Greek Orthodox Institution of Higher Learning and the only Greek Orthodox College and School of Theology in the Western Hemisphere, which for almost eight decades has been educating and preparing the Reverend Clergy of the Church at large, that the honoree brazenly declared that our Archdiocese should immediately sever Her ties with the Patriarchate and declare autocephaly.

I, as the Metropolitan of this sacred Metropolis of New Jersey, an Eparchy of the Ecumenical Throne in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, reject and denounce the position and statements of Mr. Valiotis, who’s sentiments against the Ecumenical Patriarchate are very well known, as he has vocalized them repeatedly and publicly over the past decades. In addition, I denounce the silence of those present at the graduation, as Mr. Valiotis was allowed to offer this most deplorable speech without interruption or objection.

We, the Clergy and Laity, of the Sacred Greek Orthodox Metropolis of New Jersey affirm our support and our continued devotion to the Mother Church of Constantinople, the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, the Spiritual Leader of over 300 million Orthodox Christians throughout the world. Our Mother Church is already beleaguered and, in the words of His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, lives in a state of martyrdom, yet, it continues to unceasingly offer martyrria to the divine and sacred Truths of the Gospel of Christ to the four corners of the world. Unlike Arius, Nestorius and all Heretics, who fought against the teachings and traditions of our Orthodox Faith from within, we the faithful Orthodox Christians of this sacred Metropolis, who have received and felt the motherly embrace and love of our Mother Church of Constantinople, must remain united and vocal in expressing our love, convictions and support for our Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Center of worldwide Orthodoxy. In light of recent developments in the Archdiocese, we should be thankful that we are led and overseen by, and are accountable to, the Ecumenical Throne of Constantinople.

As a spiritual son of the Ecumenical Patriarchate since birth, as a clergyman for more than thirty years and as your Metropolitan for the past fifteen, I was most disconcerted by Mr. Valiotis' statement that the Ecumenical Patriarchate is a Church "without purpose or mission." To the contrary, the unceasing labors of our Spiritual Leaders and Patriarchs and the devoted Hierarchy of the Church of Constantinople throughout the centuries, especially during these past 27 years under the Leadership of His All Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, to establish Orthodoxy here in America and everywhere are the very enactment of the mission of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which has never been simply a local Church in Constantinople, but is rather the focus of Orthodox unity around the globe.

A Church without purpose would not endeavor to convene the Great and Holy Council of 2016. A Church without mission would not be shepherding the growth of Orthodoxy on five continents and among many nations. A Church without a mission or purpose would not resurrect the holy Metropolises of Smyrna, Prousa, Kydonion, and Selyvria over the past decade, and establish the new Metropolises of Canada, Mexico, Buenos Aires, Spain and Portugal, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Korea over the past twenty years. Furthermore, Mr. Valiotis' statement that the Ecumenical Patriarchate is a Church "without a flock" is preposterous and false; as the faithful of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of New Jersey, as well as millions of Orthodox Christians in the United States of America and throughout the world, both Greek and non-Greek, consider themselves the sheep of that Ecumenical flock.

As your Metropolitan and Spiritual Father, I pray that we all remain united in Christ, as one, in our faithfulness and devotion to Christ's Holy Church and to our Apostolic inheritance which stems from the Ecumenical Patriarchate. We as Orthodox Christians living in America must regard our Mother Church with gratitude for She has guided our growth and prosperity thus far and will continue to do so in the future. We must not follow one's matricidal feelings or sentiments, but rather as loving children, we must support our Mother, who continues to embrace all of us, keeping us united in the Faith, shining forth the light which illumines our heart and our lives, the light which radiates from the ever-glowing and radiant Phanar in Constantinople.

As we approach the great feast of Pentecost, when the nations of the world were united through the descent of the Holy Spirit, we must be proud and maintain our allegiance to the Ecumenical Patriarchate for it is truly exactly that, Ecumenical and a loving mother which unites us in Orthodox service to our One Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Praying that the All-Holy Spirit continue to be and dwell in and through us as faithful members of the Great and Holy Church of Christ and the Mother Church of Constantinople.

With Paternal Love and Blessings,

† E V A N G E L O S

Metropolitan of New Jersey