



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

OXI Day Commemoration 2018

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,

Today we mark the celebration of a day wherein our forefathers courageously stood firmly against the powers of fascism despite knowing that their opposition would be met with extreme pain, sacrifice, and likely death. When the people of Greece said "OXI" to the tyrannical powers of Italy's Mussolini and Germany's Hitler, they sent shock waves throughout the world as they fearlessly stood up to these powers which proved to be a sign of hope for the allies and a symbol of resistance against these evil powers.

Outnumbered in soldiers, weapons, and military assets it seemed that the Greek people would easily be defeated against these seemingly superior forces. The unseen weapon, however, is often the deadliest. In the case of the Greek people it was their bravery. In their love for freedom, they beat the Italian army and held back the German army enough to lend the critical time the allies needed to regroup. This expression of bravery and selflessness came at a cost, however, as about 10% of the Greek population perished due to direct effects of the war. Men died in combat, women and children died of starvation, Jewish neighbors were sent to concentration camps, and clergy were executed for protecting those who were being persecuted. Archbishop Damaskinos of Athens, recognizing the image and likeness that each person possessed regardless of their religious beliefs, risked his own life by protecting the Jewish population in Athens from their deportation and extermination in Nazi concentration camps.

The Greek people's actions proved not just to be out of pride for their own sovereignty, but also as an expression that no one's freedom should be threatened. In them saying "NO" to Italy on October 28th, 1940 they furthered the cause of freedom even though it would come with costly sacrifice. Much in the same way, we as Orthodox Christians have been endowed with freedom by God so that we may exercise this freedom not for our own selfish pleasure, but for the sake of other people. Our freedom when used to help others is the ultimate expression of love. It is this same gift of freedom

that both helped our ancestors to discern their actions and overcome those difficult years during World War II that helps us today to discern right from wrong, good from evil, justice from injustice, peace from war, and love from hate. This gift of freedom from God is not just a gift we must cherish for ourselves, but it is also a gift we must preserve for others.

Thus, in our commemoration of OXI Day, let us honor the sacrifice of our ancestors, let us pray for those who stood up and said "NO" on October 28 and let us celebrate their courage with which they defended freedom in the name of God and of peace as we continually seek to honor their sacrifice by preserving the integrity of our generation by exhibiting the same resolve they displayed. Praying that Almighty God continues to bless our beloved Homeland as well as all peoples who respect and cherish freedom, I remain,

With Paternal Love and Blessings,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Metropolitan Evangelos". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. It is surrounded by a grid of small, faint text that appears to be a watermark or a placeholder for a signature block, consisting of the words "Signature.doc" and the date "21/01/0" repeated in a grid pattern.

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



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Πρός τόν εὐλαβέστατον Ἱερόν Κλήρον,
Τούς Ἐντιμοτάτους Ἀρχόντας τοῦ Οἰκουμενικοῦ ἡμῶν Πατριαρχείου,
Τούς Προέδρους καί τά Μέλη τῶν Ἐκκλησιαστικῶν Συμβουλίων,
Τάς Προέδρους καί τά Μέλη τῶν Φιλοπτώχων Ἀδελφοτήτων,
Τούς διδάσκοντας καί διδασκομένους τῶν Κατηχητικῶν καί Ἑλληνικῶν Σχολείων,
Τάς Ὁργανώσεις τῆς Νεολαίας καί ἅπαν τό Χριστεπώνυμον πλήρωμα τῶν εὐσεβῶν Ὁρθοδόξων
Χριστιανῶν τῆς Ἱερᾶς Μητροπόλεως Νέας Ἱερσέης.

*«Τὴν πᾶσαν ἐλπίδα μου εἰς σὲ ἀνατίθην, Μῆτηρ τοῦ Θεοῦ,
φύλαξόν με ὑπὸ τὴν σκέπην Σου»*

Ἀγαπητοὶ ἐν Χριστῷ ἀδελφοί,

Κάθε λαός ἔχει χαραγμένες στίς σελίδες τῆς ἱστορίας του κάποιες ἡμερομηνίες πού ἀποτελοῦν σταθμούς γιὰ τὴ μετέπειτα πορεία του. Ἐνα τέτοιο φωτεινὸ ὁρόσημο ἱστορικῆς μνήμης γιὰ τὴν Ἑλλάδα μας ἀποτελεῖ καί ἡ σημερινὴ ἐπέτειος τῆς 28^{ης} Ὀκτωβρίου 1940. Ἡμέρα ἐθνικῆς μνήμης ἀλλὰ καί εὐγνωμοσύνης πρὸς τὴ Μητέρα τοῦ Θεοῦ γιὰ τὴ σκέπη καί τὴν προστασία τῆς στὸν ἀγῶνα τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἀπέναντι στοὺς ἀλαζόνες ἐχθρούς, ὅταν σύσσωμος ὁ ἑλληνικὸς λαὸς τόλμησε νὰ ὑψώσει τὸ ἀνάστημά του καί ἀντιτάχθηκε στίς δυνάμεις τοῦ Ἄξονα, προβάλλοντας σθεναρὴ ἀντίσταση στὸν φασιστικὸ ἐπεκτατισμὸ, τὴν ἀπολυταρχικὴ βία, τὴν ἀλαζονικὴ ἀπαίτηση τῆς οἰκειοθελοῦς παράδοσης τμημάτων τοῦ ἔθνικοῦ του ἐδάφους.

Ἡ ἀθάνατη ἑλληνικὴ ψυχὴ, πιστὴ στίς παραδόσεις τοῦ ἔθνους, ἀρνήθηκε τὴν ὑποδούλωση καί ἔδωσε τὴν ἀπάντηση πού ἔπρεπε. Βροντοφώνησε σθεναρὰ καί γενναίᾳ τῷ περήφανο ΟΧΙ καί ξεκίνησε ἕναν ἡρωικὸ ἀγῶνα ἀμυνόμενῃ γιὰ τὰ ἱερά καί ὄσια, μὲ ἀποτέλεσμα νὰ αἰφνιδιάσει δυσάρεστα τοὺς εἰσβολεῖς, νὰ τοὺς ἀναγκάσει νὰ ὑποστοῦν ταπεινωτικὲς ἤττες καί νὰ διδάξει σὲ ὀλόκληρη τὴν οἰκουμένη πὼς τὰ ὑπερσύγχρονα πολεμικὰ ὄπλα ὠχριοῦν μπροστὰ στὴν ἑλληνικὴ ψυχὴ. Οἱ Ἕλληνες στρατιῶτες πολέμησαν μὲ ἀπαράμιλλο ἡρωισμό στὰ χιονισμένα βουνὰ τῆς Πίνδου καί τῆς Ἀλβανίας καί ἔγραψαν «Τὸ ἔπος τοῦ '40», κάνοντας ὅλους τοὺς λαοὺς νὰ μιλοῦν γιὰ θαῦμα, ἐμψυχώνοντας τὴν ἀποθαρρυσμένη ὡς τότε Εὐρώπη.

Ἡ ἐποποιία ὅμως τοῦ 1940 δέν ἦταν ἀποτέλεσμα ἀποκλειστικὰ ἀνθρώπινης προσπάθειας. Συνέβαλλαν βεβαίως ἡ αὐτοθυσία, ὁ ὑγὴς καί ἐνθουσιώδης πατριωτισμὸς καί ὁ ἄσβεστος πόθος γιὰ τὴν ἐλευθερία, ὅμως πάνω ἀπ' ὅλα ἡ πίστη στὸ Θεὸ καί στὴ

θαυματουργική επέμβαση τῆς Παναγίας ἐνδυνάμωσαν τοὺς Ἕλληνες στὸν ἀγῶνα τους γιὰ τὴν υπεράσπιση τῆς ἐλευθερίας τῆς Πατρίδος.

Τὸ ἥρωικό ΟΧΙ, αὐτὴ ἡ μονοσύλλαβη λέξη πού υπερέβη τὴ λογικὴ τῶν ἀριθμῶν, γεμίζει τὴν καρδιά κάθε Ἕλληνα μὲ αἰσθήματα υπερηφάνειας, συγκίνησης καὶ εὐγνωμοσύνης πρὸς ὅλους ὅσους θυσιάστηκαν γιὰ τὴν ἐλευθερία τῆς Πατρίδας μας. Τὸ θάρρος, ἡ τόλμη, ἡ ἀποφασιστικότητα, τὸ ἀδούλωτο φρόνημα καὶ προπάντων ἡ πίστη τῶν ἀγωνιστῶν τοῦ '40 ἄς γίνουν τὰ ἐφόδια μας, γιὰ νὰ ἀντιμετωπίσουμε τίς νέες ἱστορικές προκλήσεις.

Ἀγαπητοὶ μου ἀδελφοί,

Ἡ σημερινὴ ἐθνικὴ ἑορτὴ μαζί μὲ τὸν καθιερωμένο ἑορτασμὸ τῆς Ἁγίας Σκέπης, μᾶς υπενθυμίζουν τὸ χρέος καὶ τὸ ἱερό καθῆκον πού ἔχουμε ὡς Ἕλληνες, νὰ μὴ λησμονήσουμε ποτέ τοὺς ἥρωικούς καὶ ἔνδοξους ἀγῶνες τῶν προγόνων μας, νὰ τιμᾶμε τὴ μνήμη τους καὶ νὰ ἐμπνεόμαστε ἀπὸ τὸ παράδειγμά τους, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὡς ὀρθόδοξοι χριστιανοὶ νὰ ἐναποθέτουμε τίς ἐλπίδες μας στὸ ἔλεος καὶ τὴ χάρη τῆς Παναγίας, προσευχόμενοι: «*Τὴν πᾶσαν ἐλπίδα μου εἰς σὲ ἀνατίθηναι, Μῆτερ τοῦ Θεοῦ, φύλαξόν με ὑπὸ τὴν σκέπην Σου*». Καὶ νὰ εἴσαστε βέβαιοι ὅτι ὡς "φωτοφόρος νεφέλη" θὰ ἐπισκιάζει πάντα μὲ τὴν ἀγάπη τῆς τὸ ἔθνος καὶ τὴν Ὁμογένειά μας καὶ θὰ στέκεται δίπλα μας, βοηθός καὶ συμπαραστάτης σὲ κάθε δίκαιο ἀγῶνα.

Μετὰ πατρικῶν εὐχῶν καὶ τῆς ἐν Κυρίῳ ἀγάπης

Ο ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΤΗΣ



† Ὁ Νέας Ἱερσέης ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΟΣ