

March 31, 2016

My Beloved Ones,

I greet you with love in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I have returned from a visit to the Phanar, that is, the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople, where His All-Holiness our Patriarch Bartholomew extends his blessings and prayers to all of you, the clergy and the laity of this holy and God-protected Metropolis of Atlanta.

With these things in mind, I would like to turn our attention to the leadership meetings that are taking place this weekend in our Metropolis, as I would like to address all of you, but especially the participants of this gathering.

I am so very pleased at the full schedule we have, which will give me the opportunity to meet with our Vicars, Parish Council Presidents and Members, as well as our Archons, the Diakonia Deca and Metropolis Philoptochos Boards, the Strategic Planning Committee, and so many others, too numerous to mention.



As St. Paul tells us, *“Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.”* (1 Corinthians 12:27). And if we as individuals are to make up a body which is healthy, which works together towards the common goal of our Creator, then we must all offer up a part of ourselves as a sacrifice. This coming Sunday, the Third Sunday of Lent we shall commemorate the Holy and Life-Giving Cross, through which we have gained our hope of salvation. And as we will read in the Gospel of Mark, our Lord tells His disciples, *“Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me”*

I know that as laypeople many of you are called to responsibilities which are professional and family-oriented. But I tell you that it gives me a great sense of hope and peace to witness so many of you sacrificing your time and your talents in a way that is pleasing to God.

It is in this way that we shall be saved: both as the body and as individuals. For it is through your efforts, and the work of so many others, that our communities will continue to flourish: to continue ministering to the sick and the needy, and to provide rest from the turmoil of our daily lives.

As we continue our Lenten journey, I ask all of you to pray for those who are gathering for this weekend’s meetings, that the Holy Spirit continue to guide them, and all of us, as one Body of Christ.

+ALEXIOS

Metropolitan of Atlanta