

My Beloved Ones,

I greet you with love and joy in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

I am speaking to you today from Mt. Athos. This coming Sunday, August the 28th, the monasteries of the Holy Mountain—which still use the old Julian Calendar—will celebrate the Dormition of our Most Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary.

I consider it a great blessing to be able to personally commemorate this feast on both calendars, especially since the Mother of God is never far from my mind, and my heart. This Sunday, I shall pray for all of you: the clergy and the laity, the young and old; but especially for our children, that the Panagia may intercede with the Lord our God to give them the wisdom from above.

As we come to the end of summer, it is also a time for new beginnings. This Sunday represents the last weekend of the church year before the start of the Ecclesiastical New Year on September 1st. The Fathers have given us this date intentionally, as September 1st was traditionally harvest time, when we were meant to gather ourselves as the activities and labors of life began to slow down.

I realize of course, that in our modern era, this time is one of the busiest all year. Vacations end and school begins as many of us begin to move with great speed. Instead, let me encourage all of you to truly consider the Ecclesiastical New Year as an opportunity for resolutions of a spiritual nature. Resolve to find a quiet moment to pray, before or throughout the workday. Make an effort to grow closer to Christ through reading of the Holy Scriptures. Armed with these tools, you will not only be at peace while the society moves faster around you, you will also move ever closer to the Lord our God.

This time of year brings me great joy, for it is when the new Sunday school year begins and our families return to their homes. Churches begin to busy themselves with luncheons, cultural groups and festivals. For this reason, I would like express my thankfulness to both the clergy and the laity, whose zeal for the Orthodox Church inspires their parishes to continue as loving and active members of the Body of Christ.

We have many exciting programs planned as we begin this Ecclesiastical New Year: the Clergy Retreat at our own beautiful Diakonia Retreat Center, the annual Archangel Michael Feast and Honors Weekend, as well as our post-Christmas Winter Youth Rally. I hope you know that I look forward to returning home to our Holy and God-Protected Metropolis of Atlanta to experience all of these, with you, the faithful.

+ALEXIOS
Metropolitan of Atlanta

