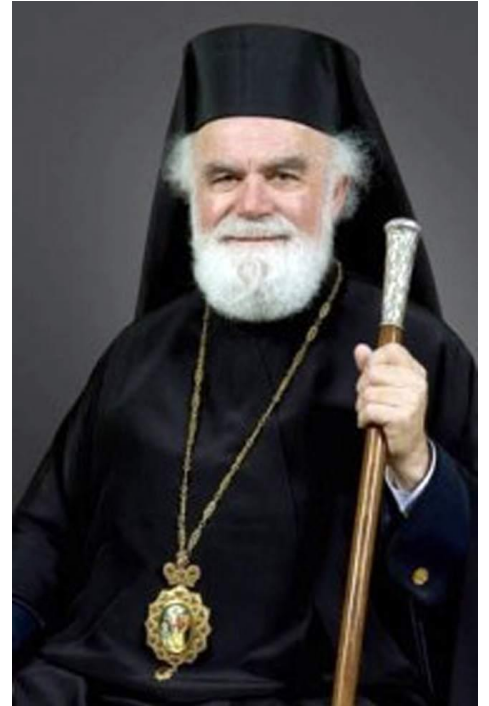


My Beloved Ones,

I greet you with love and joy as we prepare to conclude the final day of the 2017 Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Atlanta Clergy Laity Assembly and Philoptochos Conference in Raleigh, NC. Today, we have devoted a whole day to the Faith Forums, guided workshops designed to teach and clarify the 28 new programs that have been designed by the Strategic Plan for the aid of all of our parish communities and families. Many of the goals have been uploaded to the Strategic Plan website, and we are very excited to share the developments and questions that will result from the all-day Faith Forums.

I am very pleased to be able to inform you that, following the conclusion of the Assembly's sessions, Saturday morning's Divine Liturgy in the community of Holy Trinity will be live-streamed! I feel blessed that I will be able to preside over the Sacrament, particularly as it falls on the Feast of the Nativity of John the Baptist. (Click [this link](#) for more information.)



The arrival of this feast day, as well as the official beginning of the summer season have made me think of how we treat the summer months. In a secular sense, this is a time of rest and relaxation. Children are out of school, and so families will take time to gather together for vacations, and other opportunities to grow closer to one another. I wonder, however, how many of those opportunities include regular Church attendance as a family?

In one respect, I believe the decline in Church attendance during the summer months stems from a fundamental misunderstanding of the liturgical calendar. Perhaps many believe that, because we have passed through the liturgical high points of Lent, Pascha and Pentecost—and that since the feast of the Dormition does not take place until August 15<sup>th</sup>, the church itself has entered a “down period”.

I know that all of our Clergy here in the Metropolis of Atlanta take great pains to stress that this is not so; the Church is “open for business” even during the summer months. At this very moment, we are in a preparatory fast for the dual feast of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, on June 29<sup>th</sup>. In the month of July alone, we will see feasts for the Holy Unmercenary Cosmas and Damian of Rome, as well as Mary Magdalene, the Myrrhbearer and Equal to the Apostles. All this is to say that the liturgical calendar never ceases finding occasions and saints to celebrate!

I wish for all of you a peaceful, blessed and restful summer season, full of good things. I pray that we will all strengthen our bonds—familial, or as spiritual brothers and sisters—by making sure to continue giving thanks to the Author of all these summer blessings during as many summertime Divine Liturgies as we are able to attend.

**+ALEXIOS**

Metropolitan of Atlanta