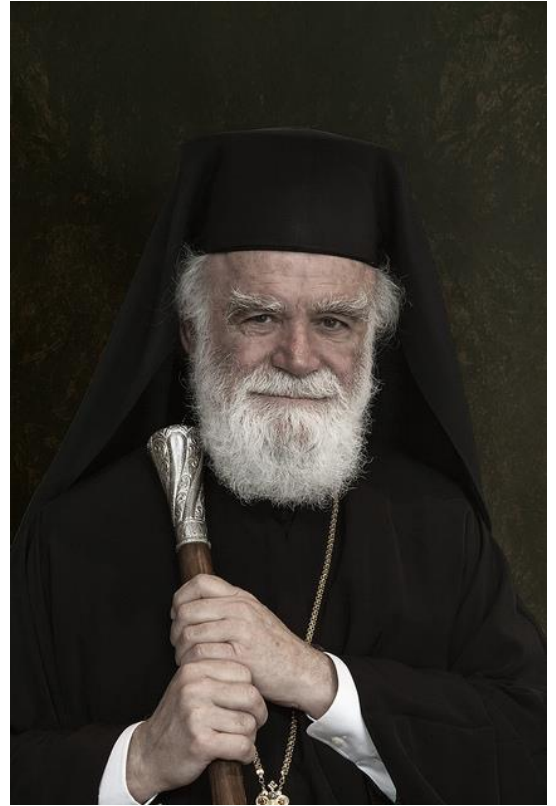


My Beloved Ones,

Together, we are all members of an institution, one which we understand to be God's Holy Orthodox Church, and therefore, as St. Paul says, we are building up the Body of Christ. This is certainly a blessing, but one that comes with obligations and responsibilities.

In this Sunday's Gospel, Christ famously tells His followers, *"You are the light of the world... Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven"* (Matthew 5:14; 16). Here, our Lord clearly gives us our sense of responsibility, if we are to truly be considered members of His Body. This statement is not simply a philosophical theory, but a statement of practical action. We must be alert to ourselves and our actions; so that in everything we do, we bring glory to His Holy Name.

This Sunday is also a special Sunday, as our Church has chosen to commemorate the Holy Fathers who participated in Seven Ecumenical Councils. In particular, I think of the Council of Chalcedon in 451, which was convened to address an issue of great confusion to the people: namely, the Person of Jesus Christ. The decision of the Synod affirmed our understanding that Christ has two natures, and that He is both fully God and fully Man. Christ, who as God willingly took on flesh to dwell among us, practiced what He preached. He Himself glorified the Father through His own good works: healing the sick, feeding the hungry, and even raising the dead during His earthly life and ministry.



As both God and Man, Jesus Christ did not simply end His lesson by proclaiming us to be the light of the world. He then admonishes His followers to keep the Commandments and the Law, which God gave to help the people live righteously. *"Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven"* (Matthew 5:17-19).

My Brothers and Sisters, this is the reason we have the Church as both an institution, and as the Body of Christ. The Church guides us towards closeness with God, helping us to keep His Word, and glorifying Him through our thoughts and deeds. By becoming closer to Him, we live, as St. Paul says, in the hope and belief that we too will be resurrected, as our Lord has resurrected.

I wish for all of you to receive inspiration from Above, along with health of soul and body, as well as the wisdom to not only assist our family and friends, but also to watch ourselves. As I continue to pray for you all, please remember to pray for me.

+ALEXIOS

Metropolitan of Atlanta