



My Beloved Ones,

As we come to the end of the month of October, I would like us all to take a moment in order to reflect on the lives of two blessed saints and pillars of the early Church, whom we celebrated this past week: St. Iakovos, the Brother of our Lord (October 23), and St. Demetrios of Thessaloniki (October 26).

St. Iakovos, also known as James the Just, became the first Bishop of Jerusalem, and he is also one of the first who put together a text for the Divine Liturgy. Among the Divine Liturgies we celebrate regularly—such as the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom every Sunday; and the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil, which we celebrate ten times per year—there are many others: including the Divine Liturgy of St. Mark, and the Divine Liturgy of St. James.

In many Orthodox countries it is a traditional custom to hold the Divine Liturgy of St. James on the Saint's Feast Day. This year, as the 23<sup>rd</sup> fell on a Monday, the liturgy was held on the preceding Sunday evening, the 22<sup>nd</sup> at the Cathedral in Atlanta. The liturgy of St. James is an

especially ancient liturgy, whose many mystical prayers and readings are meant to unite all who participate as the Body of Christ, and all who partake in the Body and Blood of our Lord through Holy Communion.

St. Demetrios is a wonderful example of how we should all live our faith as well. As a young soldier, Demetrios was blessed not only with a sound body, but a strong mind and soul. Indeed, he would have had a pleasant and easy future—had he not been a Christian. However, because he boldly confessed his faith in Christ to the emperor, Demetrios instead received the crown of martyrdom.

Even so, do we commemorate the soldiers who performed this execution? Their names are lost to history, but we know how St. Demetrios lived his faith, just as we know that we have his blessings after almost two thousand years. In his patron city of Thessaloniki the jail where St. Demetrios was held and killed still exists; and for many years pilgrims and visitors could see and receive Holy Myrrh which miraculously flowed, though lately, the flow has stopped. Even so, visitors can still venerate his holy relics, as they pray for health, strength and wisdom from Above.

I pray that these wonderful saints of our Church, St. Iakovos and St. Demetrios—as well as St. Nestor, a student of St. Demetrios whose memory we celebrate the day after St. Demetrios (October 27), will all help and inspire all. I especially pray that they inspire our young people, so that they may be as strong in their faith as St. Demetrios. May he, and all the saints, intercede on our behalf.

**+ALEXIOS**  
Metropolitan of Atlanta