



My Beloved Ones,

I greet you with love and joy in the Name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, praying that you and your loved ones receive His blessings of health, peace, and joy in this New Ecclesiastical Year!

Although I have written to you several times now concerning the Arrival of the miraculous Panagia Vimatarissa icon from the Monastery of Vatopaidi, I would like to emphasize just how important I believe this opportunity is.

The Ancient Greek philosophers were known to say, γνῶθι σαυτόν, “Know thyself.” Truly, it is important to know ourselves—not in relation to society, our friends, or even our family; we must understand ourselves, for our own growth as people. One of the ways we can come to understand ourselves, as Orthodox Christian is, of course, by prayer.

Our prayer lives are greatly benefitted, not simply by our relationship to the Holy Trinity, but by our relationship to Christ’s mother, our intercessor on our behalf, the Ever-Virgin Mary. She is kind, gentle, and understands our struggles as human beings. It is for this reason that we ask her, as the mother of us all, to strengthen us, as we journey through this life and towards theosis. Think of how blessed we are then, that, today, the Panagia Vimatarissa has come to our Metropolis of Atlanta!

I truly pray to see so many of you at the Diakonia Retreat Center, joining—along with the Brothers of the Monastery of Vatopaidi—as one family in Christ: processing, chanting, proclaiming and venerating this sacred icon all together. The Panagia, who watches over all of us, is, as we say during the Divine Liturgy, worthy to be magnified. I hope then, that you will join me, and celebrate her loving kindness as we grow together.

+ALEXIOS

Metropolitan of Atlanta