



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

Virtual Town Hall Meeting on the Ukrainian Orthodox Church

The Very Reverend and Reverend Clergy

Honorable Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Esteemed Members of the Metropolitan Council, Esteemed Members of the Parish Councils, Philoptochos Sisterhood, Faculty and Students of the Catechetical and Greek Afternoon Schools, Directors and Participants of all Youth Organizations, and all devout Orthodox Christians of the Greek Orthodox Communities of our Holy Metropolis of New Jersey

My Beloved in the Lord,

Over the last several months there have been many questions, concerns, heated-debates, and staunch opinions concerning the newly-recognized Ukrainian Orthodox Church. The process that has led to the recognition of this, the 15th autocephalous Church of the Orthodox World, has been lengthy, but filled with prayerful reflection. Since last March, I have had the immense blessing and privilege of serving as a member of the Holy and Sacred Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople which had undertaken these deliberations, discussions, and substantial decisions. It has also been a distinct honor to be one of the hierarchs of the Holy and Sacred Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to sign the Tomos of Autocephaly recently granted to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

It must be expressed that these decisions were made with the utmost care for the Orthodox faithful of Ukraine who are the spiritual children of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople and who were, up until recently, under the canonical jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Great sensitivity was taken into account to ensure that the manner in which autocephaly was granted complied with the same canonical norms and tradition by which the other Local Churches had received their own autocephaly. In making this decision, His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and the Holy and Sacred Synod did not seek to do that which was easy, but that which was proper and right. Nevertheless, there are still sincere concerns and questions from numerous Orthodox Christians throughout the world concerning this matter as well as misconceptions and fallacies circulated for nefarious reasons by others.

For this reason, on January 26, 2019 at 1:00pm Eastern time, the Archons of the Order of St. Andrew the Apostle under the leadership of their Spiritual Advisor, Rev. Protopresbyter, Fr. Alexander Karloutsos, and the Commander of the Order, Dr. Anthony Limberakis will be

sponsoring an Open Virtual Town Hall meeting on the subject of the autocephaly of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine featuring a conversation including His Eminence Metropolitan Emmanuel of France and other expert panelists from various Orthodox jurisdictions. Orthodox clergy and laity are highly encouraged to listen to this discussion and to participate at the end of the panelists' discussion at which time those who have dialed in to listen will have the opportunity to ask questions to the panel. This initiative is of the utmost importance since it will help to answer pertinent questions regarding this important topic in an honest and forthright manner while helping to dispel the inaccuracies spread by some individuals.

It is my sincerest prayer and hope that all faithful Orthodox Christians will find the time to participate in this Open Virtual Town Hall Meeting so that everyone may be aware of the events occurring in the Orthodox Church and to better understand why and how the Ukrainian Orthodox Church was given autocephaly. This initiative will also offer all Orthodox Christians a valuable and an essential understanding of our canonical tradition and traditional Orthodox ecclesiology. Praying that you are all granted the manifold blessings of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ in this New Year, I remain

With Paternal Love and Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Metropolitan Evangelos". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The word "Metropolitan" is written in a smaller, more compact script, while "Evangelos" is written in a larger, more prominent script. The signature is centered on the page.

† E V A N G E L O S
Metropolitan of New Jersey