



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

August 5, 2019

Mass Shooting Tragedies

The Very Reverend and Reverend Clergy

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 Communities of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of New Jersey

My Beloved in the Lord,

Once again our nation has endured too much heartache, too much anguish, and far too much loss when we experienced not just one, but two mass shootings this past week, specifically in El Paso, Texas and in Dayton, Ohio. At least twenty-nine have lost their lives and dozens more wounded due to the vicious and senseless acts of two persons filled with anger and hate since it appears that in at least one of these events, race was the impetus for the attack. Such malice towards one other human being is inconceivable enough, but to target this many people is simply evil.

Some may ask themselves, “Why does God allow this to happen?” Why does He allow even one person to die this way, much less twenty-nine? The answer may lay in the fact that God listens to our prayers and He hears our supplications, but He also provides us with the ability to use our freedom to combat these evils. These shooters were not born like this. They did not grow up in childhood wanting to do this. They were not created with hatred in their hearts and a proclivity to kill. God made humanity inherently good since we are all made in His image and likeness. It is because of the fall and because we as a society continuously fail to address these pressing issues that these tragedies continue.

God has given us the intelligence, the rationality, and the aptitude for confronting these issues using our own freedom. The question then becomes, what are we doing to confront these problems? Hundreds of thousands of Americans, family and friends, co-workers and neighbors, suffer with untreated psychological issues. The plague of racism and hatred against fellow human beings is a continuous blight on our society that we have not yet fully addressed. Balancing personal freedoms with common-sense solutions contributes to our inability to protect our communities. All of these and several other issues are at the root of this problem.

Above all, the main issue is that many have forgotten how to see the person of Christ in their neighbor. If we were able to come to this simple yet profound realization, there would be no evil in the world. It is something we must work at achieving and it is something that cannot be kept only to ourselves, but shared with all people.

My beloved in the Lord, these tragedies have tried our spirits, but we must not lose heart that, with the Lord's help and in allowing Him to guide us to address these underlying issues, we may overcome the pain these heartbreaking events. The psalmist tells us, *"Weeping may endure for the night, but joy comes in the morning"* (Ps. 30:5). Though our nation has suffered much in these past few days we can be confident, if we place our trust in God and put our faith into action, that love, tolerance, and peace will prevail. I pray you all endeavor to live Christ-like lives and to spread the joy of the Gospel so that we may combat evil by using love as our weapon of peace.

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