



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF SAN FRANCISCO

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΦΡΑΓΚΙΣΚΟΥ

FEAST OF THE INDICTION 2017

Beloved in the Lord,

The Feast of the Indiction is upon us, the beginning of the New Ecclesiastical Year. Along with this Feast we also celebrate the American Labor Day holiday. Families and friends will gather one more time in order to mark the end of summer and inaugurate the activities of autumn. Created in the late nineteenth century, the intent of Labor Day was to honor the American worker. We should remember that dimension of this holiday.

The Ecclesiastical year provides us with a new opportunity to renew our labors as individuals, families, and communities of faith. When the Lord began His ministry, He read from the Prophet Isaiah, *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release of the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”* (Luke 4:18-19, cf Isaiah 61:1). The Lord has given us a “to do list” to guide our labor. His words should inspire us as we begin this New Year.

Labor is honorable and part of God’s plan for humanity. In the Book of Genesis (2:15) we read, *“The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it.”* The Lord made us responsible for the planet on which we live. Through our labor, Earth sustains us. Through our labor, we have used many natural resources to build and to create amazing cities

and cultures, to cure and heal many illnesses and diseases, and to lift up humanity overall. In the Divine Liturgy we offer the natural gifts of God, transformed by human labor, back to God. That is the meaning of the exclamation in the Liturgy, ***“Thine own of Thine own, we offer to Thee...”***

In our quest to improve life, we may have forgotten the honorable and potentially divine intent of our labors. We have been overtaken by greed and desires that have led us to misuse our planet’s resources and gifts, forgetting that they are gifts from God. A consequence of the fall of Adam, sin, has infected our good and natural desires. As His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew has taught us for nearly three decades, committing a crime against the natural world is a sin. Our Patriarch states, ***“If human beings were to treat one another's personal property the way they treat the natural environment, we would view that behavior as anti-social and illegal. We would expect legal sanctions and even compensation. When will we learn that to commit a crime against the natural world is also a sin?”*** This connection means that we must labor to protect the natural world and to restore any damage that human activity and our footprint has caused. But we must also reflect on our labor, how our misdirected desires, have led to these sins against the natural world, resulting in pollution, extinction of God-created flora and fauna and more, and as a result the degradation of human life.

We must also extend our reflections into the other environments in which we live, but especially our life in this society. We must consider the pollution of our contemporary civil discourse. It is not very “civil” at all. It too has been polluted and thus has degraded our lives. As the Assembly of Bishops recently stated, ***“The Orthodox Church emphatically declares that it does not promote, protect or sanction participation in . . . acts of hatred, racism, and discrimination, and proclaims that such beliefs and behaviors have no place in any community based in***

respect for the law and faith in a loving God.” These, too, are sins that separate us from God and divide us from one another; sins for which we must ask God's forgiveness and mercy. We, as faithful members of His Church, must also labor to protect civil discourse and to restore it to the purpose for which it was created, the edification of humanity, to build up the Body of Christ (Ephesians 4:12).

The time is now, my brothers and sisters in the Lord, to embrace the start of the New Ecclesiastical Year and re-purpose our labors: to become instruments of healing, reconciliation, and justice, to become better stewards of the Earth, and better citizens. This New Ecclesiastical Year offers us a new opportunity to recommit ourselves to this task in all our labors.

May the Lord guide your steps throughout this New Year, and may His abiding love grace and mercy be granted to you always.

With Love in Christ,


✠ GERASIMOS
Metropolitan of San Francisco