

My Beloved Ones,

As we are in the second week of Great Lent, I would like to convey to the clergy, the monastics and all our congregations, the best wishes of His All-Holiness, Our Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. I am here in Constantinople, representing the church of America and especially the Metropolis of Atlanta, which is all of you, the clergy and the laity.

This past week, which was the first week of Great Lent, all the Synodical Hierarchs had the pleasure of liturgizing during the Sunday of Orthodoxy with His All-Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew. And so we prayed for the Church of Constantinople, the Church of America, as well as all the autocephalous churches and Patriarchates throughout the world.

I would like you to know that I prayed for all my clergymen, that they provide the spiritual means for all the faithful of the Metropolis of Atlanta. I especially prayed for our youth, for whom think of constantly; asking Almighty God, through the intercessions of the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, whose Feast of the Annunciation we celebrate tomorrow, that peaceful minds and pure hearts be given to our youth. In this way, they will be able to observe and be critical of society, as they stay away from the Evil Spirit and his works.

At the same time, I pray for the future of our youth; a future for which I depend upon them, since we have not managed to present to them a society in which they can live peacefully. The events which have taken place within the past week in Constantinople (where I was present) as well as in Brussels are the result of the way in which our society lives: in a manner far from God our Creator, and equally far from the intentions of the universe he gave to us.

I would also like to share with you the meetings in which we have discussed the Orthodox Church in the world, including the church in America. In these meetings, we have discussed the Metropolis of Atlanta, and I have received the blessing of His All-Holiness regarding what we are doing at the Diakonia Retreat Center, which has now also entered into his private prayers.

The Diakonia Retreat Center represents a place where we the faithful can set aside time to face the reality of the society in which we live. It is through prayer and critical self-examination that we can alter ourselves, and our attitudes toward the world.

With all these thoughts in mind, I ask you to pray for me as I travel, as I constantly think and pray for you and your endeavors. God Bless you, and God Be with us, as I look forward to next week's meetings with the Metropolitan Council, the Metropolis Philoptochos Board, as well as the Archons, the Youth Department, and all the ministries of our Holy Metropolis, all of which require the presence of the faithful.

+ALEXIOS
Metropolitan of Atlanta

