

My Beloved Ones,

I greet you with love and joy in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Today, I write this message from one of our beautiful communities, St. John the Divine in Jacksonville, Florida, where we are continuing our Biannual Clergy-Laity Assembly. Tomorrow, Friday the 28<sup>th</sup>, we will be blessed to be a part of His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America's first official visit to our Metropolis of Atlanta. We are humbled and overjoyed to welcome Him so soon after His Enthronement! This Assembly will demonstrate the ways the work of our Metropolis supports His call to *"...bring the Holy Archdiocese of America to the greater understanding that we are the Body of Christ, and each of us a precious member."*



Indeed, the theme of this year's Assembly, which comes from the end of Mark's Gospel, addresses this topic, as our Lord instructs His Disciples to *"Go into the World and Proclaim the Good News to the Whole Creation."* (Mark 16:15) Thinking of evangelizing to "the whole world" can make this task sound frightening; but recalling His Eminence's words from his first pastoral message, we understand that we are not asked to accomplish this Great Commission on our own; rather, we must work together, supporting one another, the Body of Christ, the Church.

As St. Paul says in His Epistle to the Romans, *"Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them..."* (Romans 12:6) This Assembly offers each of us an opportunity to use our individual gifts—as teachers, preachers, choir members, youth workers, organizers, and helpers—to fulfill our Lord's Commission to spread His Good News—both for His Glory, and to the benefit of everlasting life.

I want to express my gratitude to Fr. Nicholas Louh, the Parish Council president, and Parish Council members, the Philoptochos and all the St. John the Divine family for their warm welcome and hospitality. I also would like to congratulate Archon Nicholas Furriss, the Assembly committee, the members of the Metropolis Philoptochos, as well as all the volunteers for the unselfish offering of their time, energy and resources. May this fellowship and time together bring to all of us inspiration and joy as we seek to become even greater disciples of the Lord!

**+ALEXIOS**  
Metropolitan of Atlanta