



My Beloved Ones,

As we begin this Ecclesiastical New Year, I would like to take this opportunity to offer some words for the new school year as well.

Our schools and universities, like so much of our world, will look very different this year. For those who are taking part in in-person education, there is concern about COVID-19; for those who are learning from home, it is a new learning environment, that requires perhaps even more patience and flexibility.

I am reminded of a sermon offered by the Reverend Fr. Peter Orfanakos, who on the subject of any “new start” said that, *“These crusades provide a sense of retreat from the mundane and provide the time and place for us to refocus our life on Christ and His teachings... For this to take place we are called to be Good Stewards with our time, our talent and our*

treasure. To show ourselves ‘to be a pattern of good works; showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility.’” (Titus 2:7)

In this spirit of positivity and integrity, I know that we will be kind to our students, their parents, and their teachers. Everyone is learning new things during this unique time in our world, and we should therefore do our best to remember, that in all things, we are called to work and live in a way that demonstrates the compassionate face of Christ to everyone we may meet—whether this is on a video screen, or in person.

Though we do not know in which season this pandemic will come to its end, I ask that each use the new church & school years to stay focused on the will of our Lord. In the stresses of working from home, learning from home, or learning in a different kind of classroom, we must remember that *“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8)*—the pandemic is only temporary. This is not to suggest that it should not be taken seriously, but it should remind us that our students and parents alike should carry themselves as true Orthodox Christians: as Good Stewards, making the most of our time, in a proper and positive spirit.

When, God willing, we can resume some kind of “normal life”, may we use the lessons this pandemic has taught us to carry us forward into the future. In all things, and in all ways, may these new Ecclesiastical and Scholastic years be blessed!

+ALEXIOS

Metropolitan of Atlanta