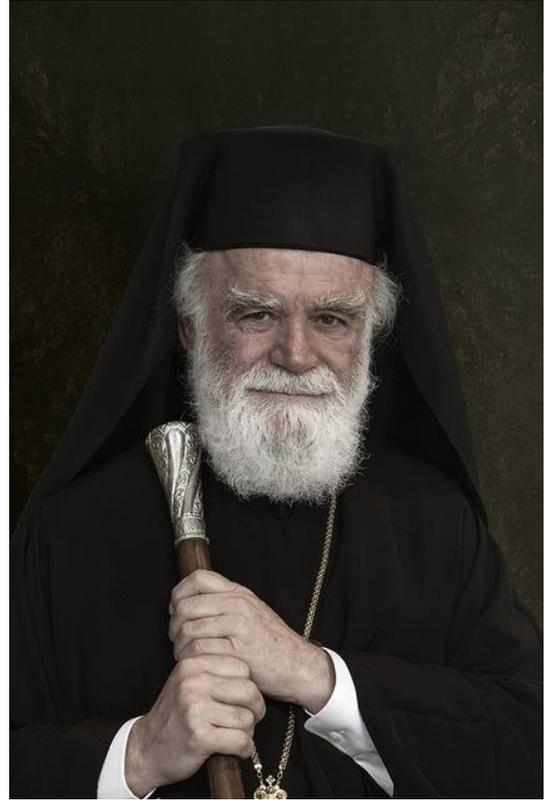


My Beloved Ones,

Two weeks ago, the Gospel reading for that Sunday concerned our Lord's miracle of walking on the water. I refer to this reading now, however, because much of our Metropolis is in the midst of hurricane season; and especially after Hurricane Ida struck New Orleans, sixteen years after the anniversary of Hurricane Katrina.

In the Gospel account, St. Matthew writes that our Lord encouraged His Disciples to sail across the Sea of Galilee, which would give Him time to pray privately. However, after several hours we read that, *"...the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. And early in the morning he came walking toward them on the sea. But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." (Matthew 14:24-27)* Of course, we know then that Peter was inspired to join our Lord, but that when He stepped onto the water, He began to doubt, and after, to sink. After saving Him, our Lord asked Peter, *"You of little faith, why did you doubt?" (Matthew 14:31)* Thinking about this passage and the storms to which many of our Metropolis have been subjected, I am reminded of our Lord's question.



We know that the passage ends with Peter and the other Disciples worshipping their Master as the Son of God, but the Evangelist wants us to hear our Lord's question, *"Why did you doubt?"* So often in our era, it can become easy for us to fall into despair at the state of the world. However, despair is a sin, because it suggests that we *know* that the world is hopeless—when only God Himself is all-knowing. Like the father of the possessed boy, we cry out, *"I believe; help my unbelief" (Mark 9:24)* We call upon God, because we know that He is the Lord of the Powers, even when we doubt.

As we continue through the remainder of this season which brings such unpredictable weather to many parts of our Holy Metropolis, may we do our best to continually turn to our Creator to support us, uplift us, and sustain us; trusting in His will to help us weather all the many kinds of storms in our lives.

+ALEXIOS
Metropolitan of Atlanta