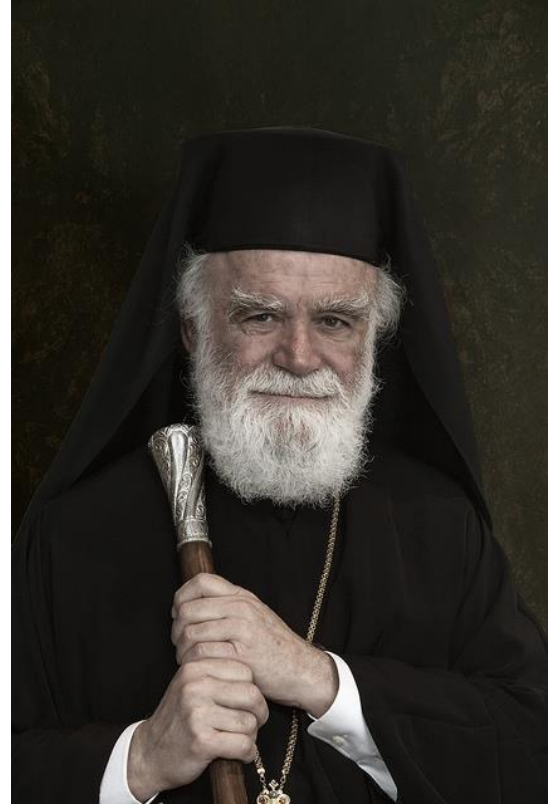


My Beloved Ones,

As our country prepares for the memorials that will come with the historic 20th anniversary of 9/11, I would like to add my voice to those offering their thoughts and prayers for this weekend. Since the events of that Tuesday morning are now history to a generation of young people who were neither old enough, nor even alive at the time to bear witness, it is important that we continue to reflect upon the meaning of that day. What comes to mind is the confusion experienced when the first plane struck the North Tower, followed by pain when it became clear that this was a series of attacks. However, just as strong as the sorrow that occurred when the Towers fell, were the feelings of compassion that emerged as first responders and volunteers searched through the rubble. The day was meant to cause feelings of despair, but in the wreckage, what emerged were images of people supporting one another.



In the hymns for Great and Holy Friday, even as we lament the Crucifixion of our Lord, the expectation of the Resurrection is still present: *“We worship Thy passion, O Christ. Show us also Thy glorious resurrection.”* Just as we experience the events of Holy Week with both sadness and hope, we cannot forget the thousands who perished on an ordinary Tuesday morning; but neither should we allow those who wished to inspire pain to succeed. Especially as we look forward to the completion of the St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and National Shrine, we must remember both the paradoxical sadness and love that this day has come to signify.

I recall the prayer so beautifully offered by my brother, His Eminence Metropolitan Methodios of Boston, in the days after 9/11. I reproduce it below, because it will help those who read it to recall both the feelings and thoughts of that time—while also stressing our firm belief that our Lord understands our pain, and uplifts humanity through the message of His Gospel. As we prepare for this somber anniversary, may we continue to hold this day in our hearts, reflecting on both the lives of those who were lost, as well as those responders who now suffer ill health and other kinds of trauma, because they understood our Lord’s command: *“Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”* (Matthew 25:40)

Triune God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—Benevolent Lord, Creator and Sustainer of us all, hear us, Your children, at this time of national crisis and unbearable pain. We come to You because You are our Savior and Benefactor Who grants peace and solace to peoples and nations. It is You Who bore our sins on Your precious Holy Cross. It is only You that can heal our wounds and ease our suffering.

You have blessed our nation abundantly and guided us in times of sadness and despair. Yes, You have blessed America. "You have stood beside her, and guided her through the night with a light from above."

Protect, we pray, our nation and its citizens at this time of tragedy of trial and crisis. Shield us under the shadow of Your Cross. Grant to us Your peace, Your love and help. Bestow solace and strength to the families of the innocent victims of the barbaric acts of violence in New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania.

Open Your loving arms and welcome into Your tender embrace our brothers and sisters, our relatives, our friends and neighbors. . .the countless anonymous innocent who (in but an instant) were consumed in the horrific holocaust of hate.

Strengthen, we pray, our brave police and firefighters, the doctors, the nurses, and rescue workers who have rushed to the side of the victims. Their eyes have seen unspeakable violence, human pain and tragedy.

We pray for our President, the members of Congress and all in Public Service. Guide them and inspire their decisions at this time of national trial and travail.

Help us and people throughout the world to comprehend that we are all Your children. We are all brothers and sisters created in Your image and likeness. Guide us to live in harmony with one another, respectful of each other's human rights and human dignity. We ask this of You, for You are a benevolent and loving God and to You do we ascribe glory, to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

+ALEXIOS
Metropolitan of Atlanta