

BLESSED NEW ECCLESIASTICAL & SCHOOL YEAR!



SEPTEMBER 2021

My beloved parishioners, I pray that again this year you have had a safe and enjoyable summer! It looks like the pandemic intends to become part of our lives and all of us, as faithful and courageous Christians, should put our trust in God and make the best of these challenging circumstances.

September 1st is the beginning of the **New Ecclesiastical Year!** This is a time we contemplate on the wisdom of God's Creation and we thank Him for allowing us to live yet another year! The last big feast of the old Ecclesiastical Year was the **Dormition and Assumption of Theotokos** on August 15th. The first big feast of the new Ecclesiastical Year is the **Birth of Theotokos** on September 8th. It is very appropriate to begin and end each year with the All-Holy Mother of God (Panagia Theotokos), the one who joined heaven and earth and the one who merged the created world with the uncreated divine nature. Her own miraculous birth from two aged and barren parents, Joachim and Anna, shows how the Creator of natural laws can override them as He pleases. This is because He is the God who **"can raise up descendants of Abraham from stones"** (Matthew 3:9), the God who **"unfolds the heavens like a curtain"** and **"makes the mountains smoke at His touch"** (Psalm 103). The same way He overrides the laws of nature with Panagia's birth (and later with His own birth), He can also override them by keeping His Holy Communion cup safe from any disease, during this pandemic and every other time!

September is also the month of the **Holy Cross!** **September 14th**, the feast of the Holy Cross, is one of the four strictest fasting days of the year, during which our body and soul kneels before the biggest symbol of our faith! It is through the Cross that Resurrection was made possible! It is **"through the Cross, salvation came to mankind"** (Galatians 5:11). It is often with a Cross that we must follow our Lord (Matthew 16:24), like the one we are now carrying due to this pandemic.

Finally, September is the beginning of the **New School Year**. As our young return to their classes, we also remember our own childhood. The leaves turn brown and fall from the trees, the seasons change and so do the generations. Yet, youth is our future, and they are also the future of our Church! It is up to us to teach them well, not only with words but with our example. Parents give the good example when they are leading the prayer at home at the beginning and the end of each day and each meal. Parents raise good Christians when they are talking and reading to their children about the Lord. Parents teach children how to worship when they are cheerfully leading the way to church and its ministries on Sunday mornings. Parents cultivate virtues into children when they are showing love and kindness to all people and living creatures, and when they are keeping the environment clean as God created it, by recycling at home. Our children are watching us and copy our behavior. From spiritual parents and grandparents come (in most cases) spiritual children and grandchildren. The proof is in the list of Saints of our Church – they all had virtuous parents and grandparents. Finally, there is one thing grownups need to emulate children: that is, **their pure heart!** This is why our Lord invites us to become like children, because **“to the children belongs the Kingdom of Heaven”** (Matthew 19:14).

This year is again different from those few years back. However, please remember whenever our Lord met anyone under stress, He gave them the same advice: **“Have no fear! Only have faith!”** (Mark 5:36). As much as this period is difficult, it will also pass! This year, the feast of the Holy Cross is on **Tuesday, September 14th**. Please honor this great feast of our Orthodox faith with your participation in the Divine Liturgy, and if your health permits, by fasting on that day. **Blessed New Ecclesiastical and School Year!**

With Love in Christ,
Your Parish Priest,
Fr. Gregory

