



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF ATLANTA

Reverend Clergy, Ambassadors, Presidents and Esteemed Parish Council Members of the Metropolis of Atlanta

My dear brothers in Christ and co-workers in the vineyards of our Lord,

“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.” (1 Peter 4:10)

I greet you with love and joy in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and I pray that you are enjoying a blessed and peaceful summer.

As we look forward to the beginning of our spiritual journey through the new Ecclesiastical Year on September 1, it is appropriate to direct our minds and our hearts toward our personal, family and Parish life. As your Hierarchy and spiritual father, you know that I have to be responsible for the spiritual welfare of the Faithful of our Holy Metropolis of Atlanta, and I have become aware of several instances of difficulties and misunderstandings in our communities that could have been prevented by different procedures and better organization. Having this in mind, I have decided to ask you, the Priest and the Parish Council, to assist me in improving the organization of our communities, so that you will have more resources to better serve your Faithful.

Therefore I would like to see an **Education, Culture and Youth Diakonia Committee** established in every Parish community, or an existing committee reorganized, under the direction and with the cooperation of the Priest(s), to serve the educational and cultural needs of the community. This concept is based on the existing structure of our highly successful Metropolis Education, Culture and Youth Diakonias Board. I envision that your local Parish **Education, Culture and Youth Diakonia Committee** will function in much the same way as the Board of Education does in our public schools; that is, the committee will develop programs and policies, advise the staff, and provide the means to assist the Priest, Parish Council, teachers, youth advisors and volunteers in your community.

The Parish **Education, Culture and Youth Diakonia Committee** will be comprised of at least six members representing the Parish Council, parents of children participating in the catechetical school, Greek school, dance and other youth and cultural activities, and other Parish members in good standing whose vocation is related to education. In an effort to encourage and ensure the involvement of other members in your Parish life, the number of Parish Council members will comprise 1/3 of the committee membership that you will establish. Of course the Parish Council will support the committee and the appointees will serve at the discretion and direction of the Parish Council. Thus, the committee will be a powerful tool for the Priest in your community to carry out his ministry to the Faithful, sharing and communicating his vision for education, family enrichment, book fairs, presentations, workshops, seminars, trips etc.

I would like to see the **Education, Culture and Youth Diakonia Committee** begin working together as soon as possible, evaluating and studying the needs of the community under the guidance of the Priest and Parish Council, during August through mid-September. By the end of September, they will have formulated a detailed proposal of activities, programs, fundraisers or the like for the coming academic and ecclesiastical year, including plans for implementation, staffing, budgets etc. They will then submit this plan to the Priest and Parish Council for further discussion and final approval.

Of course, the committee can also help the Priest find teachers, speakers, presenters and facilitators for classes, workshops, seminars and programs, and vice versa. The Parish **Education, Culture and Youth Diakonia Committee** will also continue to evaluate and monitor all the educational and cultural programs of the Parish during the year, reporting periodically to the Parish Council.

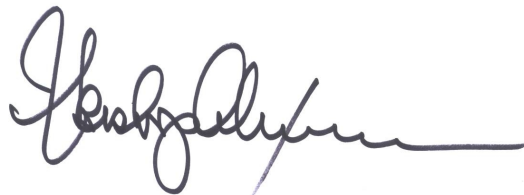
In this way, we will be able to find creative ways to meet the needs of the Faithful, and the Priest will not be personally responsible for staffing and implementation of programs. For example, the Priest will not find himself in the difficult situation of having to hire or fire staff members and volunteers, since the Committee will be responsible for appointments and evaluations of staff, volunteers and programs, under the supervision of the Priest, with the final decision of the Parish Council. Appointments should be made for one year, with the **Education, Culture and Youth Diakonia Committee** reviewing all appointments annually (or as needed in the case of difficulties or misunderstandings) and making recommendations to the Parish Council.

Enclosed you will find copies of our Metropolis of Atlanta Education, Culture and Youth Diakonias Board organizational chart to give you an idea of the structure of the committee, as well as an Education, Culture and Youth Diakonias response form. Please send the completed forms to Mrs. Michelle Cassimus, Metropolis of Atlanta Education, Culture and Youth Diakonias Coordinator as soon as possible. If you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact either myself, the Chancellor V. Rev. Fr. George Tsahakis or Mrs. Cassimus.

My dear Priests and lay co-workers, I want you to understand and realize that I believe that implementation of this plan for a Parish **Education, Culture and Youth Diakonia Committee** will better enable the Priest and the Parish Council to fulfill their obligations to the Faithful, by involving the entire community. This will also enable the Priest to be a loving spiritual father to the flock that I, as your Metropolitan, have entrusted to his care, under my omophorion in our Holy and God-protected Metropolis of Atlanta and in our Lord's Vineyard. This way all of us can know the joy and satisfaction of serving our Lord with all our heart, mind, strength and soul, to the best of our ability.

May our Lord bless you and your loved ones now and always, bestowing upon you a life abundant with harmony, good health, wisdom, patience and joy! Looking forward to seeing you in the near future, I remain,

Paternally yours with love in our Lord,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alexios', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

+ALEXIOS

Metropolitan of Atlanta