



THE BISHOP OF EASTERN AMERICA
DIOCESE OF EASTERN AMERICA • THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

ЕПИСКОП ИСТОЧНОАМЕРИЧКИ
ЕПАРХИЈА ИСТОЧНОАМЕРИЧКА • СРПСКЕ ПРАВОСЛАВНЕ ЦРКВЕ

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The New Ecclesiastical Year

TO ALL PUPILS, STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, STAFF
AND, IMPORTANTLY, PARENTS AND GUARDIANS
OF THE EASTERN AMERICAN DIOCESE
OF THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

SUBJECT: Archpastoral Word at the Beginning of the New School Year

*“Now about the middle of the feast
Jesus went up into the temple and taught.
And the Jews marveled, saying,
‘How did this man get such learning without having been taught?’
Jesus answered them and said,
‘My teaching is not my own. It comes from The One who sent me.’*
(John 7:14-16)

**TO THOSE WHO LEARN, THOSE WHO TEACH AND THOSE WHO NURTURE,
MOST BELOVED IN THE LORD – ALL!**

On this promising day, the Indiction of the Ecclesiastical New Year, kindly permit me as your Archpastor and Father in God, to offer my prayerful best wishes for this new school year, which is a vital part of everyone’s life. May the Hand of God guide you who study and learn, and those who teach you, to teach and fill everything with the Lord’s teaching, as your parents will have instilled in you at home, for each home is truly a little church.

At all times be watchful, protect yourselves, your Christian integrity, and your Christian dignity and freedom, which was given to all humanity at creation by Him, Who is Divine Wisdom, Wisdom Incarnate – *Aghia Sophia!* In so doing you will uncover for yourselves why education is synonymous with enlightenment! You will become transfigured by the Light of Knowledge, which comes only from Christ, Who is the Light of the World! As such we are summoned to *“let your light so shine before humanity, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father, Who is in heaven”* (Matt 5:16).

However, do not be deceived, as there is much darkness and danger in this world. We can all learn a brilliant lesson from our celebrated tennis champion of all time, Novak Djokovic, who, when asked how he managed to battle through fatigue and eventually win the final of the Open Championship in New York, affirmed: *“God and Guardian Angels helped me!”* (US Open, 2023). God exists, do not let anyone tell you otherwise! Our Guardian Angles are always there to protect and guide us. We simply have to learn how to sense their presence.

Children, have we not been told from the very beginning that the Fifth Commandment says, *“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you”* (Exodus 20:12). Do not allow anyone to dissuade you and lead you away from your family, as wolves lead sheep away from their flock into the dark. In darkness,

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there can be no enlightenment, for there is no light. Honor your clergy, whom God has sent to teach you how to walk in the light, who offer you Light and Life itself in its fulness whenever you receive Holy Communion. Honor those teachers who offer you a good and proper education. Learn discernment in everything that is taught to you. Always ask your parents and clergy if you have any questions about what is being taught to you.

Finally, do not forsake your Christian education. We have set up our church schools to teach you the Word of God, so that you may always be able to discern right from wrong! Your church school teachers work very hard to prepare your lessons and to teach you. Show them respect and come regularly to class, for every lesson missed is a lesson lost! Never fear or lose heart. Always remember, as the Holy Prophet Ezra said, *"because the Hand of the Lord my God was on me, I took courage..."* (Ezra 7:28). The 'Hand of God' is something very profound. For God's invisible and intangible Hand is always on you: leading and guiding you, your teachers and parents, encouraging and protecting you, strengthening you and giving you courage: Wisdom.

With Archpastoral Blessings and Paternal love,

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