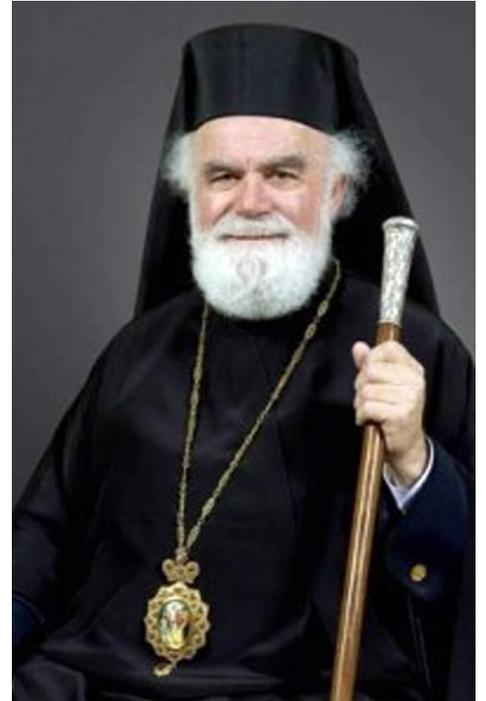


My Beloved Ones,

This Sunday, our Church shall honor two very important groups that make up the Body of Christ. Firstly, we shall honor our Orthodox Christian college students and Orthodox Christian Fellowship (OCF), the organization that helps them maintain their roots during their years of secondary schooling. Sunday October 2nd is also Church Music Sunday, an opportunity to thank those who, through their talents, help to make our worship services so beautiful and meaningful, through the chanting and singing of hymns.

In thinking of these two groups, and indeed, when thinking of all the faithful who seek to help us grow closer to God, this Sunday's Epistle reading concludes with a verse that is especially appropriate. In his Second Letter to the Corinthians the Apostle Paul reminds us that *"all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God."*



All the people, St. Paul tells us—whether young or old; whether singers, mentors or students, have been given gifts. And these gifts, the apostle tells us, are not meant to magnify their own specialness; nor are they meant to draw praise to themselves from men. While acknowledgement and praise have value, they are not long-lasting.

Instead, Grace has been given to those who minister to and pray with our students, to those who sing and accompany our choirs, so that thanksgiving may return to our Creator and God. For it is from Him that these dedicated servants receive their gifts, and it is fitting that Him these gifts are returned.

As we approach the Feast of St. Romanos the Melodist, the patron saint of all church singers, this coming Saturday, and as we seek to honor our college students and church musicians on Sunday, let us all ask ourselves how we might help. Might we help a young person, seeking to be reunited with the Church? Or, might we seek to join the ranks of those who so beautifully mimic the angels? Or, if we have other talents, what can we do, to ensure that the grace that has been given to us, returns to its Source?

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read '+ALEXIOS'. The signature is stylized and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

+ALEXIOS
Metropolitan of Atlanta