

My Beloved Ones,

I write to you today with a heavy heart, as I'm sure you all join with me in praying for those lives that were lost as a result of the tragic wildfires in Attica, Greece. Together, we ask our Holy Theotokos to intercede on behalf of their loved ones, bringing comfort to them in the difficult days ahead.

Of course, for the many of us who hold our Mother Country in our hearts and minds, loss of life and property are shocking and saddening. They may even seem especially difficult in light of the economic hardships that this country has undergone over the last ten years.

However, I encourage us to seek out those details that show the world who the people of Greece truly are. I think of the firemen, who are performing their duties at the risk of their own lives to prevent further death and destruction; I think of the rescuers and responders who are working passionately and diligently to find survivors and to minister to them. Most of all, I think of the people of Attica, who in the days to come will shoulder a tremendous burden in rebuilding—but they will go on.

The history of modern Greece has been very different from our ancient past in many ways, but not in one respect: Greeks are still just as resilient as their ancient fathers. In spite of enslavement, revolution, unstable governments, world and civil wars, the Greek people have never given into hopelessness. Having called upon our God and our Ever-Virgin Mary to bless our fight for freedom on the Feast of the Annunciation, March 25 1821, the Greek people understand that it is our faith in God, and in the Holy Tradition of the Orthodox Church that has given us strength to overcome tragedies, whether as individuals, or as a community. I believe it is for this reason, that we have so many brave individuals who came to the aid of their fellow Greeks in their time of need.

As I once again offer up my prayers for the victims and their loved ones, I ask that the parishes of our Metropolis of Atlanta join with all the parishes of our Holy Archdiocese in offering a special Memorial Service this coming Sunday, July 29<sup>th</sup>.

As we pray, our Archdiocese has also asked that all parishes offer extra collections on this Sunday the 29<sup>th</sup>, and on Sunday August 5<sup>th</sup>, which will serve as financial aid to those individuals and communities recovering from the fires. All collections, either parishes or individuals, can be made payable to the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese (8 East 79th Street, NY, NY 10075) and designated for the Attica fires Relief Fund.

It is my fond prayer and hope that we can demonstrate our capacity for Christian charity, as we come to the aid of our brothers and sisters in their time of need.

**+ALEXIOS**  
Metropolitan of Atlanta

