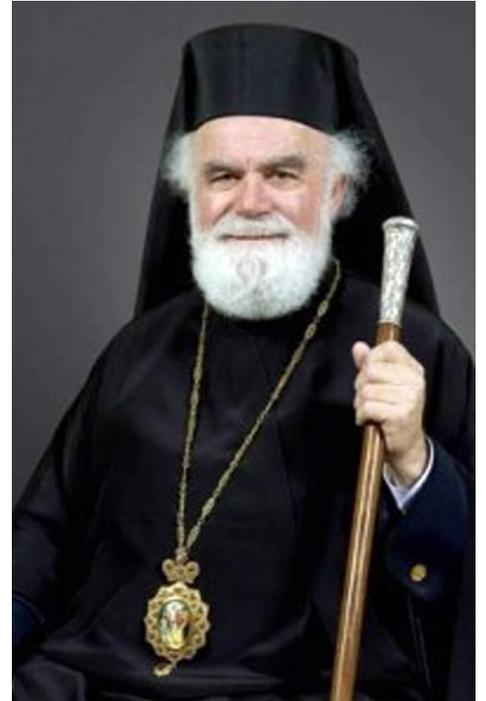


My Beloved Ones,

This week we have concluded the second and final part of our “DYNAMIS” tour, this time of the northern cities of our Metropolis. Once again, I would like to thank Mr. Bill Marianes, Mr. Chris Mandelaris, Mr. Gerry Clonaris, Ms. Zoe Kafkes and Ms. Julia Moricz for their diligence in helping to present this new vision of our Metropolis with all of you, the people.

Of course, a dialogue can only truly be achieved through open, loving communication, and so a great many thanks must be given to all those who travelled, from both near and far, to the eleven communities who so generously hosted us. I judge this tour a success, and I do so by a simple marker: by the joy, enthusiasm and intellectual stimulation which greeted all the ideas presented. I hope and pray that you feel the same, and that guided by the Holy Spirit, the seeds which were planted in these meetings will do their part in bearing much fruit.



As we approach the remainder of Great Lent, the Holy Fathers wisely chose this week to commemorate St. John Climacus, whose spiritual text *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* is meant to fortify us as we approach, not only the end of the fast, but also Holy Week and the Passion of our Lord.

A common struggle for humanity is the struggle with our own ego. Our ego would have us believe that we are capable of great acts of our own volition, independent of help from anyone or anything else. In this state, our spiritual lives, our souls resemble those of little children, intending to prove that they are self-sufficient. What St. John Climacus makes clear is that, as we climb the ladder; as we avoid the slings and arrows of the Devil and the world, we are not simply climbing to heaven—we are growing spiritually.

The great and wonderful mystery however, is that as we climb up the ladder to join ourselves to our Creator; as we learn the things necessary to step on the next rung, our horizon grows—because we ourselves are becoming smaller: milder; humbler; more chaste; kinder to our brothers and sisters.

This is the great and wonderful lesson St. John Climacus provides to us, and as we prepare ourselves to honor his memory this coming Sunday, I urge us all to reflect upon *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, as we continue our struggle to achieve union with our God.

+ALEXIOS

Metropolitan of Atlanta