



Serbian Orthodox Church in North and South America EPISCOPAL COUNCIL

September 1/14, 2018
LIBERTYVILLE

At the Beginning of the Ecclesiastical New Year

To the Reverend Priests and Deacons, the Monks and Nuns, the Executive Boards and Members of the Church-School Congregations of the Serbian Orthodox Communities in North and South America, the Circles of Serbian Sisters of our Parishes and Dioceses, the beloved Children and Youth and the entire Serbian Orthodox Family in North and South America:

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Once again, we, your hierarchs and fathers in the Lord, greet you, our dear spiritual children, on Feast of the Indiction, the beginning of the Church's Liturgical Year. Every beginning offers us new opportunities for growth in faith and love and spiritual understanding towards God and each other, limited only by our desire and willingness to deepen our relationships in and through Christ. The Church's Liturgical Year, which begins on September 1/14, with its many services, its feasts and fasts, its commemoration of God's saving work in the many varied events of salvation history, and by presenting to us countless examples of God's saving grace through the lives of His holy ones, the saints, provides inspiration, understanding, and support to us on our personal path of salvation which leads us towards the Kingdom of God. Let us all enter deeply into this new Liturgical Year and all that it offers us, especially through the Holy Mysteries crowned by our union with Christ in the Holy Eucharist, so that we may be enlivened by the Holy Spirit to live to the glory of God the Father!

At this new beginning, we are mindful of our responsibility as stewards and caretakers of God's good Creation, which he so freely and lovingly shares with us. In offering us these gifts of creation, and of life itself, God intends us not only to use these gifts wisely and well here and now, but to multiply them and to pass them on to future generations, not only intact, but enriched. Our stewardship of creation is one of our central responsibilities as human beings, and it is right and necessary that we should increase our awareness of ecological concerns and our activities in protecting and nurturing all that God has entrusted to our care.

This consciousness of our central role as stewards and caretakers extends especially to our existence as members of God's Holy Church, who are called to act as God's hands and feet in every time and place, doing His work and His will not only for our salvation, but for the salvation of the whole world. Each of us as baptized and chrismated members of the Body of Christ have a role and responsibility to dedicate our time, talents and treasure to the upbuilding and welfare of our local parishes, our dioceses, and the *pleroma*, the fulness, of Christ's Church. We call upon all as good and faithful stewards, to

share generously of the gifts God has given you with your Holy Church, for “*God loves a cheerful giver.*”

As our God is the God of Truth and Justice, we are also called to work to bring about justice in this world. As Serbian Orthodox Christians and hierarchs, we are especially mindful of the lack of truth and justice shown to so many of our brother and sister throughout the world, including Serbs, especially in the holy Serbian heartland of Kosovo and Metohija. We call upon our faithful people to continue to offer spiritual, material, political and moral support to our suffering and oppressed brothers and sisters there.

And so, our dear spiritual children, let us embark upon this New Liturgical Year with renewed and enlivened faith and trust in God, “*commending ourselves, and each other, an all our life to Christ our God.*” May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Your intercessors before the Lord,

LONGIN, Bishop of New Gracanica-Midwestern America
PRESIDENT OF THE EPISCOPAL COUNCIL
SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH IN NORTH AND SOUTH AMERICA

MITROPHAN, Bishop of Canada

MAXIM, Bishop of Western America

IRINEJ, Bishop of Eastern America

KIRILO, Bishop of South and Central America