



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF CHICAGO

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΣΙΚΑΓΟΥ

Greetings by His Eminence Metropolitan Nathanael of Chicago
Great Vespers for the Care of God's Creation
August 31, 2020

Saints Peter and Paul Church (Glenview, IL)

Your Excellency and beloved brother in Christ, Bishop Bartosic, it is a great honor for us to receive you and the delegation that you head this evening. Beloved fathers and sisters and brothers in Christ, on behalf of the entire Saints Peter and Paul Parish, I welcome you this evening as we gather to offer glory, honor and worship to our Heavenly Father, and His only-begotten Son, and His All-Holy and life-giving Spirit for the sacred gift of life.

When Christians speak of the sacredness of life, most turn their attention to the call to protect life in the womb. Certainly, such life is both vulnerable and sacred; however, when we consider how fragile life really is, we can't help but acknowledge that all life is vulnerable and sacred, and definitely worthy of our intentional protection, and prayers.

In the early 80's, Ecumenical Patriarch Demetrios of Constantinople discerned the ever-rising need for a Christian voice that would pray for and defend God's creation. The Ecumenical Patriarchate was determined to resurface the ancient Christian teachings concerning our sacramental and soteriological bond with God's creation. In 2015, this effort gained even greater momentum through the support of Pope Francis, who joined his brother Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and declared September 1st as the World Day of Prayer for Care of Creation, issuing the monumental papal encyclical, *Laudato Si'*.

Tonight, we come together as children of Christ and add our collective voice to those of our spiritual leaders—Pope Francis and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. As we celebrate the Great Vespers service for the care of God's creation, let us also give thanks to our Lord Jesus Christ for all those who have labored before us to advance the *Dialogue of Love* between our two Churches. It is truly a gift from above to see how our efforts to cultivate authentic dialogue has now blossomed into something much more beautiful, to common works of love and compassion for humanity and the rest of God's creation. This is a model of "pro-life" collaboration! Not only promoting care for the most vulnerable human beings, in the womb, on the margins of society, and approaching the end of life, but also for the birds, the fish, the land animals, the insects, and the trees, for all of these are "good," all are icons revealing the living God, and all are entrusted to our care.

Your Excellency, please convey my heartfelt and sincere gratitude to His Eminence Cardinal Cupich, for appointing a delegation to represent him. Kindly reassure His Eminence that the Metropolis of Chicago proudly stands next to the Archdiocese of Chicago, ready to serve the needs of all people in our blessed city, and please thank him for his fraternal love and support.

Now, brothers and sisters in Christ, let us pray to the Lord!