



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF CHICAGO

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΣΙΚΑΓΟΥ

Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Chicago

Statement Following the Tragedy in Highland Park, IL on July 4, 2022

“The Lord is near to the brokenhearted, and saves the crushed in spirit.” (Psalm 34:18)

Beloved Spiritual Children, Brothers, Sisters, and Neighbors,

Monday’s horrific tragedy in Highland Park, Illinois, leaves us brokenhearted and crushed in spirit. As a local community of faith, we grieve and pray with all who lost their loved ones and whose loved ones were injured on this dark day—a day celebrating freedom that turned to terror, a day for family rejoicing that turned to families weeping. We also thank those who courageously and lovingly responded to their fallen neighbors, offering medical care and working to restore safety, regardless of the risk to their own wellbeing.

There are no words capable of conveying the depth of this tragedy, or the similar shootings that have occurred recently in communities, schools, and places of worship across our nation. Expressions of sympathy—“thoughts and prayers”—while well-intentioned, are insufficient. We must recognize that there is a deep sickness within our body politic, one that cannot be healed merely through the justice system or public policies. At its core, violence against one another stems from a spiritual illness, from an inability to see each other as fellow children of God, each created in the divine image and deserving of ultimate respect. In the words of the recently canonized Saint Sophrony the Athonite, *“Those who do not see in themselves and, worse, do not see in their fellow human beings any permanent worth become like wild beasts in their mutual relations, and readily take to slaughtering each other. Oh, what a paradoxical mixture we are—on the one hand, human persons inspire delight and wonder, on the other, sad bewilderment at our cruelty and savagery”* (*We Shall See Him as He Is*, 40).

As we mourn together for those who were killed and offer our support to those recovering from physical and mental injuries, we also must take steps to address the root causes of violence in our nation. This is a task to which we are *all* called; it is the responsibility not only of public servants but of all people of faith and goodwill. *We* must work to *see* one another, to mend broken relationships, to exercise generosity, to befriend those on the margins, and to seek forgiveness for our own interior brokenness—in short, to open our hearts more widely to God and neighbor—if we hope to end this vicious cycle of brokenheartedness. May God be merciful on us, and may we extend mercy to each other.

+NATHANAEL, Metropolitan of Chicago

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About the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Chicago

Tracing its roots back to 1923, the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Chicago is the diocese of Greek Orthodox faithful in Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, northern Indiana, and southeastern Missouri, consisting of 58 parishes and two monastic communities. The Metropolis is one of nine regions in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America and is presided over by His Eminence Metropolitan Nathanael. The general offices of the Metropolis are temporarily located in Lombard, Illinois.

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