My Beloved Ones,

As we approach the end of this month, we can see that the church calendar has given us the opportunity to celebrate many different saints, including monks and Hierarchs. We observe not only the Three Hierarchs on January 30th, but we also commemorate their individual Feast Days throughout the month (St. Basil on January 1st, St. Gregory the Theologian on January 25th, & St. John Chrysostom on January 27th), as well as the lives of the Patriarchs of Alexandria, Sts. Cyril & Athanasios on January 18th. St. Athanasios was a defender of Orthodoxy against the heresy of Arius. It is thanks to St. Athanasios that we received the first half of the Creed in 325 from the Ecumenical Council of Nicaea, which makes clear that we the faithful understand how the Son of God is indeed “…consubstantial with the Father…”

Among those Monks celebrated in the month of January is the individual St. Athanasios wrote about, the highly venerated ascetic, St. Anthony the Great (January 17th). St. Anthony not only gave his family’s great wealth to help the poor, but he also left the society and its cities to go into the lonely desert, in a time when this practice was mostly unknown. All these to which I am referring, are a reminder that that Church seeks to give us a blessing as we enter into the secular new year. As we seek to grow spiritually and improve our lives, we have these spiritual fathers, Hierarchs and Monks, whom we can imitate.

These Feasts are also an essential reminder of the power of our Orthodox Faith to our 21st century world. If many people worshipped our Trinitarian God through the veneration of these Saints, how much more should we, despite our advancement and education in the secular world, continue these practices? The Orthodox Faith stands for a continuity that begins with Old Testament, and continues through the Incarnation of the promised Messiah, when His coming taught us to give up selfish concerns, and to take up our Crosses as we focused on loving our neighbors as ourselves. This is what we are called to do in imitation of God, who, as St. Paul writes in his Epistle to the Romans, “did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all…” (Romans 8:32)

Therefore, as we journey to the conclusion of this first month of the new year, we must do our best to think of our own connection to these special Saints, who dedicated their lives, and gave of themselves to the betterment of their fellow human beings, for the good of the Church & the glory of God.

I pray, and I ask us all to pray, that we will be inspired by these Saints with the enlightenment which comes from above, so that we may enter the new year, guided, and guarded by them in 2022, and all the days of our lives.

+ALEXIOS
Metropolitan of Atlanta