My Beloved Ones,

As members of the Body of Christ, we are surely blessed, but we also have clear responsibilities. In this Sunday’s Gospel, Christ tells His followers, “You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:14-16). Our Lord gives us not just a statement of philosophy, but a call to action. We must be careful, so that in everything we do, we bring glory to His Holy Name.

This Sunday commemorates those Holy Fathers who participated in the Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon in 451. This Council was called to address a heresy, advocated by a presbyter named Eutyches, who claimed that Christ had only one divine nature. This heretical teaching gained many followers, including the Patriarch of Alexandria, who, like Eutyches, was sent into exile after the Council disapproved their teachings. In this way, those holy Fathers also acknowledged the wisdom of St. Paul’s advice to Titus in this Sunday’s Epistle: “After a first and second admonition, have nothing more to do with anyone who causes divisions, since you know that such a person is perverted and sinful, being self-condemned.” (Titus 3:10-11) The Church sets our understanding of theology, not in a legalistic spirit, but so that we can truly feel the mystery, in which God willingly took on flesh to practice what He preached: glorifying His Father in Heaven as He healed the sick, fed the hungry, and even raised the dead.

As both God and Man, Jesus Christ also insists that we hold to the correct understanding of what God teaches: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfil. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:17-19). In this way, when we commemorate the Fathers of the Fourth Ecumenical Council, we honor their commitment to the Word of the Lord: not simply as things written down, but as examples from lives which glorified Him through their thoughts and deeds.

Just as they never denied or strayed from the Word of God, this Sunday may we pray that they intercede to Christ on our behalf, so that we might inspire our family, friends, and neighbors to see icons of the living God in everything we do.

+ALEXIOS  
Metropolitan of Atlanta