

September 13, 2007

To the Very Reverend and Reverend Clergy, Monastics and Faithful
of the Orthodox Church in America

Dearly Beloved in the Lord:

At the end of August numerous news reports informed us all about the tragic and devastating fires in Greece. More than sixty people died in the fires, many homes and communities were destroyed, the environment is affected for years to come, and the livelihood of many thousands of people is threatened through loss of livestock and crops.

In our churches we have offered prayers for those who have died and for the suffering families and communities. We continue to accompany in prayer our brothers and sisters in Greece.

As the tragic crisis in Greece unfolded, we saw once again the important Christian mission of charity accomplished on our behalf by International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC). IOCC responded immediately and effectively, and will continue its humanitarian assistance work in Greece during the period ahead.

We are reminded yet again that the establishment of IOCC fifteen years ago was a wise decision. The humanitarian programs of IOCC enable us as Orthodox churches in North America to offer not only prayers and sympathy to those who suffer, but also the hand of assistance and support in the name of Christ.

The Executive Director of IOCC, Dean Triantafilou, spent several days in Greece to assess the crisis personally. Other IOCC staff members are in Greece to ensure the proper use of IOCC resources to help the suffering communities in the most effective way. We thank the staff of IOCC for their dedication in works of charity and love.

I appeal to the parishes and parishioners of the Orthodox Church in America to send generous monetary gifts to IOCC, identifying "Greek Fires" as the program for which the gifts are being sent. I request that special prayers for the suffering Greek communities continue to be offered, and that special collections be held for the IOCC program of assistance to Greece. Finally, I encourage parish priests to inform the parishioners about the importance of IOCC's labors on our behalf, and to stress the solidarity we feel for our sister communities in Greece, with whom we share the Orthodox faith.

Please consult the attached releases from IOCC, where you will find the necessary information for sending contributions for "Greek Fires" relief work.

With love in Christ,



+HERMAN
Archbishop of Washington and New York
Metropolitan of All America and Canada

