



**Archpastoral Message of His Beatitude
Metropolitan Tikhon
on the Beginning of the Ecclesiastical Year, the Day of Prayer for Creation
September 1, 2017**

To the Clergy, Monastics and Faithful of the Orthodox Church in America and to all who are suffering as a result of Hurricane Harvey,

It was on September 1, 1989 that His All-Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Demetrios I of blessed memory proclaimed the first day of the Ecclesiastical Year as a "Day of Prayer for Creation." Since that day nearly 30 years ago, faithful the world over have offered prayers for creation, for its healing and good estate, for the welfare of those who inhabit it, and for the inspiration to serve as wise and faithful stewards over the many gifts and blessings God has so freely given to His People.

This message is especially poignant at this time in history, as we ponder the tragedy of Hurricane Harvey, which during the last week of August had devastated southeastern Texas and many other points along the Gulf Coast. The storm -- considered to be the worst in US history -- relentlessly visited the region with a record amount of rain, causing widespread flooding and other damage that in time will experience its own "healing." Countless individuals and families -- many of whom have lost everything as a result of the storm -- are also in need of healing as they patiently pursue the means by which life might once again return to "normal." And those who have lost their lives in the storm stand, above all, in our prayers, that they may receive eternal rest "where there is neither sickness, nor sorrow, nor sighing, but life everlasting."

While grieving with those who have been devastated beyond measure by Hurricane Harvey and its lingering effects, we proclaim boldly the hope that our Lord, Jesus Christ, offers as He says, "Behold, I make all things new" [Revelation 21:5]. Our most compassionate God grieves with us as we pray for the renewal of ourselves and the creation of which we are called to be stewards. The unmatched assistance rendered by first responders and an endless array of volunteers, who continue to provide a supreme example of compassion for one's neighbors, is a sign of God's presence in the midst of tragedy. And, while all of us are called to intensify our prayers for the victims of Hurricane Harvey, we are likewise called upon to put our faith into action by contributing to organizations such as International Orthodox Christian Charities, whose representatives have been "on site" in Texas for several days. Those who are in a position to contribute in other ways -- by collecting and delivering essential items, clothing, food and water, and cleaning supplies, for example, or by partnering with

local and regional agencies -- surely will play an important role in "making all things new" for those who otherwise might hold little hope in the days ahead.

And so our prayers for God's creation have taken on a new meaning this year -- one that is quite personal and immediate. Our thoughts and love are with those who have suffered -- and who continue to suffer -- as a result of Hurricane Harvey. Our faith, put into action, can truly "move mountains" as we grieve with those who suffer while revealing in our own lives and response that our Lord indeed is watching over them -- and us -- as He makes "all things new."

May our loving and compassionate Creator bless us now and in the days to come, and may He inspire us to do all that we can, regardless of our personal circumstances, to bring about the renewal of His creation and His People!

With paternal love and blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tikhon", preceded by a small cross symbol.

+ Tikhon
Archbishop of Washington
Metropolitan of All America and Canada