



# GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF CHICAGO

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## ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΣΙΚΑΓΟΥ

To the Reverend Clergy, Monastic Communities, and blessed faithful of the Holy Metropolis of Chicago.

Beloved brethren in the Lord,  
Christ is Risen!

One hundred and one years ago, the Greek Genocide, which began in Eastern Thrace in April of 1914, reached the Pontus region of the Ottoman Empire. Today, as we do every May, we mourn and remember the fate of our fellow Greek Orthodox Christians. As a Hierarch of Pontic descent, this commemoration has special significance for me personally, and I am grateful to share with you some thoughts on this auspicious day.

These Greeks, whose ancestors lived in communities along present-day northern Turkey near the Black Sea for three millennia, were targeted by Ottoman authorities for expulsion from their ancestral lands along with Armenians and Assyrians. The first genocide of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was a genocide against Christians. Great historical shrines, like the ancient Monastery of *Panagia Soumela*, were desecrated and destroyed. Christian communities that flourished throughout those lands for centuries were systematically deported and massacred.

After more than a century, our wounds are still open. Our tragedy remains unacknowledged by those who must recognize it and repent for the sins of the past. The denial of genocide is widely recognized as the final stage of genocide.

Last year, we received a glimmer of hope. In the Armenian Genocide Resolution that passed the United States Congress this past December, the Greek Genocide was acknowledged. We came one step closer to assuring our ancestors that they will not be forgotten—that their tragedy, their deaths, their genocide will be recorded for all of history.

We seek this recognition for our brothers and sisters not out of a sense of vengeance or mere vindication. Our desire is not to punish but to help ensure that other religious communities will not face a similar fate in the future. If we are to put meaning to the words “never forget” or “never again,” we must be honest about what happened in the first place.

Once again, we offer prayers to the Risen Christ for the peaceful repose of those who perished in the genocide, and we entreat our Lord to grant them rest among the saints. We promise to honor their legacy and proclaim the historical truth for generations to come so that our world will not witness such atrocities ever again. May their memories indeed be eternal.

With paternal love and blessings in the the Risen Christ,

+Metropolitan Nathanael of Chicago