

His Eminence
The Most Reverend
Metropolitan JOSEPH

The Right Reverend
Bishop THOMAS



Archbishop of New York and
Metropolitan of
All North America

Diocese of Oakland, Charleston,
and the Mid-Atlantic

ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE
OF NORTH AMERICA

GREAT AND HOLY PASCHA 2018

Beloved brother Hierarchs, Reverend Clergy, God-fearing Monastics,
and all my Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ our True God:

Christ is risen! Indeed, He is risen!

The bright glory of Christ's resurrection dawns upon all humanity and all of creation is renewed and redeemed. Through our participation in the death and resurrection of Christ, we become heirs to His kingdom and capable of union with the Almighty and thrice-holy God. This is the culmination and purpose of our spiritual struggle during Great Lent. We began the period of the Fast with the words of the Psalmist, "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion." (Psalm 136) To the extent we engaged in the ascetical struggle of Great Lent, we bear within us the joy that comes from our return to our true home-union with God.

In his Paschal Orations, Saint Gregory the Theologian reminds us that our spiritual efforts continue and intensify in the glow of Paschal joy.

Yesterday I was crucified with Him; today I am glorified with Him.

Yesterday I died with Him; today I am made alive with Him.

Yesterday I was buried with Him; today I am raised up with Him.

Let us offer to Him Who suffered and rose again for us ... ourselves, the possession most precious to God and most proper.

Let us become like Christ, since Christ became like us.

Let us become Divine for His sake, since for us He became Man.

He assumed the worse that He might give us the better. He became poor that by His poverty we might become rich. He accepted the form of a servant that we might win back our freedom.

He came down that we might be lifted up. He was tempted that through Him we might conquer. He was dishonored that He might glorify us. He died that He might save us. He ascended that He might draw to Himself us, who were thrown down through the fall of sin.

Let us give all, offer all, to Him who gave Himself a Ransom and Reconciliation for us.

We needed an incarnate God, a God put to death, that we might live. We were put to death together with Him that we might be cleansed. We rose again with Him because we were put to death with Him. We were glorified with Him because we rose again with Him.

A few drops of Blood recreate the whole of creation!

Unworthily, I ask for your holy prayers during this paschal season.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bishop Thomas". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rt. Rev. Bishop THOMAS (Joseph)
Auxiliary Bishop, Diocese of Oakland, Charleston, and the Mid-Atlantic

"The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch" (Acts 11: 26)

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