

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

September 1, 2019

Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ!

*"You crown the year with Your goodness,  
And Your paths drip with abundance."* Psalm 65:11

I greet each of you in the name of our Savior the Lord Jesus Christ as we embark upon a new church year. The Lord grants us to see the dawn of another new year for our repentance, nothing else. It is not given carelessly or frivolously, and because it is God's gift to us, we will have to give an account of how we spend this gift freely given to us.

*"See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil"* (Ephesians 5:15-16). Yes, the days are evil and we must be vigilant lest we be led along by their logic, the logic of this world. Saint Irenaeus of Lyons says that the time falling between Christ's becoming man and His second coming at the end is the time in which God causes the fruits of history - that is, the saints - to ripen. How can we turn our coming evil days into a year acceptable to the Lord?

As Orthodox Christians we have an obligation to redeem the time, each and every day, by living a life permeated by prayer and repentance. Our secular responsibilities must be influenced and seasoned by our spiritual life, not the other way around. All too often this is precisely the stuff we should bring to confession.

In one of her talks to her nuns, Gerondissa Macrina counsels them:

*Take advantage of every minute of your life with more prostrations, more prayer ropes, and more spiritual reading. Avoid idle talk because with idle talk a person becomes spiritually empty and the grandeur is erased from his soul. If we do even one extra knot on our prayer rope, our guardian angel will record it; a few prayers or good thoughts will be stored up for later. Christ saves up all these things, and when the time comes for us to depart for the next life, we will take them and go to Christ. (Words from the Heart, Homily 39)*

As the new year dawns, let us renew our efforts to work out our salvation through the tools the holy Orthodox Church provides to us. May the Most holy Theotokos protect you and may the thrice holy God bless you and give you strength.

Yours in Christ,

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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