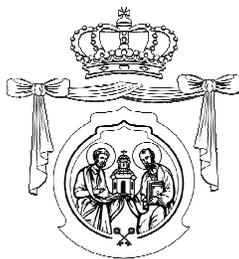


His Eminence
The Most Reverend
Metropolitan JOSEPH

The Right Reverend
Bishop THOMAS



Archbishop of New York and
Metropolitan of
All North America

Diocese of Charleston, Oakland,
and the Mid-Atlantic

ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA

Great and Holy Pascha 2017

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!

We celebrate the slaying of death, the destroying of hell, the beginning of another way of life that is eternal. And leaping for joy, we sing a hymn to the Cause, the only blessed and most glorious God of our fathers.

On the Holy Mountain of Athos, this troparion from the Paschal Canon is repeated seven times on the Great and Holy Feast of Pascha. In repeating these holy words composed by Saint John of Damascus, we enter into the joy of Pascha. This prayer brings joy to the world for it proclaims the Resurrection in all its radiance and splendor, as Elder Porphyrios so clearly explains:

Through Christ and His resurrection, we do not get across a river, a gorge, a canal, a lake, or even the Red Sea. We have moved across an abyss that no human being could cross on his own. Ages came and went with the world waiting for this Pascha, for this passage. Our Christ passed from death to life! That's why today 'we celebrate the slaying of death, the destroying of hell.' Death is no more. We celebrate today 'the beginning of another way of life that is eternal,' a life with Him. Now there is no more chaos, no more death, no more slaying, no more Hell. Now everything is joy, thanks to the resurrection of our Christ. Human nature is resurrected with Him. Now we too can rise again that we might live with Him eternally ... What bliss is contained in the Resurrection! 'And leaping for joy, we sing a hymn to the Cause.' Have you seen how young goats now in the spring frolic on the green grass? They drink some of their mother's milk and then prance about leaping for joy, and so do we celebrating the ineffable joy of the resurrection of our Lord.

In the fiery and resplendent glow of the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ, no worldly event can dim the brightness of the Lord's Pascha, our Pascha! May the joy and victory of Pascha carry us all from this passing world to the world of Christ's radiant resurrection where we will be forever with Him. May God bless you and grant you all many years of health and happiness in our new life in Christ Jesus.

Unworthily, I ask for your holy prayers during this holy 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 Charleston, Oakland, and the Mid-Atlantic

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

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