

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

March 25, 2018

Feast of the Annunciation of the Most Holy Theotokos

Greetings in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ!

“Be it done unto me according to thy word.” These are words of the Most Holy Theotokos in response to the angel Gabriel’s announcement. These are the nine words that erased the disobedience of our forefathers in the Garden of Eden and ushered in the advent of our salvation. Our holy father John Chrysostom remarks, “An angel speaks with a virgin, because a woman spoke to a serpent.”

Saint Gregory the Wonderworker proclaims: “But in the holy Virgin alone is the fall of that (first mother) repaired” (*First Homily on the Annunciation to the Holy Virgin Mary*). It is in her obedience to the will of God that the age of salvation is announced and proclaimed to all the world. Holy obedience to the will of God is a foretaste of the promise of the blessed life of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Saint Gregory Palamas’ homily on the feast describes it perfectly:

The Virgin Mother, and she alone, is the frontier between created and uncreated nature. All who know God will recognize her as the one who contained Him who cannot be contained. All who sing hymns to God will praise her next after Him. She is the cause of the benefits that preceded her, the protectress of those which came after, and through her those good things which are eternal shall be received. She is the theme of the prophets, the first of the apostles, the support of the martyrs, the dais of the teachers. She is the glory of those on earth, the delight of those in heaven, the adornment of the whole creation. She is the beginning, fount, and root of the hope stored up for us in heaven. (*Homily 14, On the Annunciation*)

A blessed feast to all! Most Holy Theotokos save us!

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)