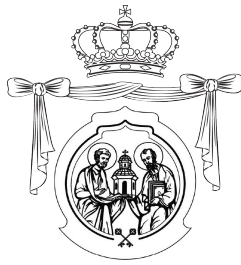


His Eminence
The Most Reverend
Metropolitan JOSEPH

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**

ASCENSION & PENTECOST 2018

Beloved in the Lord,

I greet all of you in the joy of the ascended Lord Jesus Christ Who, having completed His divine mission on earth, returns to the right hand of the Father. The reconciliation between God and man has been completed, and the heavens gather with the earth to sing a triumphant hymn of praise to the thrice-holy God.

As we contemplate the Apostles' heavenly gaze, we look forward with anticipation and longing to the next great feast of the Church, Pentecost, which is so intimately linked to the Ascension. On the night before He suffered, the Lord Jesus promised His disciples to not leave them orphaned: "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26).

After the Ascension, the Lord Jesus no longer walks on the earth teaching, healing, and sanctifying, for that is now the ministry of the Church through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of Truth, the Comforter, speaks in and through the Church continuing the salvific work of Christ.

Indeed, the Lord Jesus has not left us orphaned but enlightened us through the power of the Holy Spirit Who proceeds from the Father. Christ has ascended to the heavenly realms, taking our humanity with Him. Ten days later, the Holy Spirit descends to earth to enlighten the Apostles, sanctifying them and empowering them to bring Christ to the ends of the earth.

Our joy should be resplendent today and always: "Thou hast ascended in glory, O Christ our God, and gladdened Thy Disciples with the promise of the Holy Spirit, making them confident through the blessing that Thou art the Son of God, and Deliverer of the world."

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bishop Thomas".

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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