

His Eminence
The Most Reverend
Metropolitan SABA



Archbishop of New York
and Metropolitan of
All North America

ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA

Prot. no.: 155/2025

Great and Holy Pascha - 2025

Beloved in Christ:

The Most Reverend Hierarchs,

The Reverend Priests and Deacons,

And the devout People of God in this blessed Archdiocese,

Christ is risen! I greet you with the most beautiful proclamation on this radiant and divine Pascha. I offer my heartfelt prayers for each of you daily, asking for God's abundant mercy and the joy of victory over death—every kind of death—for all of you.

I will not address the glorious event of the Resurrection from a doctrinal perspective today, but instead, I wish to offer a brief reflection.

In our Church, each feast is a moment where we relive the event itself. At Pascha, as you know, we walk with our Lord Jesus through every step of His salvific journey, culminating in His resurrection from the dead. The Cross precedes the Resurrection; death precedes life. This is why we begin our Paschal celebration on Great and Holy Friday evening. In the middle of the service, immediately after the chanting of the lamentations for the death of the Lord, we begin chanting the Resurrectional verses: *"Blessed art thou, O Lord, teach me thy statutes."*

There is a beautiful tradition in some churches where this funeral service begins with clergy wearing dark purple vestments, the color of the Lenten season. Then, following the lamentations, they change into white vestments. It is worth noting that white, the color of the Resurrection, becomes predominant in the church coverings and clergy vestments following the service.

All of this is an outward expression affirming that the Cross (death) and the Resurrection are one inseparable event. If we walk with Christ in His Passion, it is to prepare for the joy of His Resurrection.

Thus, it is only the repentant—those who recognize their sins and feel the need to be freed from them—who know how to crucify their sins with Christ, bury them in His tomb, and rise with Him in His Resurrection, striving toward the face of the Risen Lord. Then their eyes become fixed on Christ the Risen One, and through His Resurrection and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit,

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

they come to understand that they are called to live not on earth, but in heaven—and thus realize that their Christian calling is to make earth itself a piece of heaven.

After our Christ defeated death, we now understand—by the grace of the Risen Lord—that we are responsible for transforming the world and restoring it to the Kingdom of God, beginning by purifying it from sin. But we have also begun to understand that this great work does not begin with others – it begins with us and within us.

What remains is for us to live a new life: a life free of sin, a life the world does not know, for it is according to God's will, not our own. I invite you to reflect with me on words written by Metropolitan Georges Khodr on Pascha 2014, when he had reached the age of ninety-one:

“I am a crossing, O Lord, until I meet You. Do not allow me to distract myself: ‘Shine Your face upon Your servant,’ that I may become of Your light. Take me to You, that I may know You. Do not leave me in the wilderness of this world. Do not leave me prey to the beasts. Come, for in Your coming I am formed. If You come to me, I will complete my journey toward Your face, O Lord. If I see You, Your face becomes my world. Nothing benefits me but Your face. That is Pascha. Let no other face distract me from You. Fix my eyes upon it. Each day, I desire Your face, O Master. Let it suffice for me as my life. Train me to see You as my all in this age and the one to come, so that I may understand You are existence itself. Discipline me to forsake all things to see You. If I attain You, You will take care of me. I will become Paschal in You. And if I reach You, my journey ends.” (From **"Who Am I at Pascha," Pascha 2014**)

May the joy of our Risen Lord flood your hearts at all times.

Yours in the Risen Christ,



+SABA

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