

RESURRECTION PASTORAL LETTER 2019

+ NATHANIEL

**By the Mercy of God, Archbishop of Detroit and
the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America**

To the beloved clergy, monastics and pious faithful
of our God-protected Episcopate:

Grace, mercy and peace from God,
and from us our fatherly love and hierarchal blessing.

“Glory be to him who can keep you from falling and bring you safe to his glorious presence, innocent and happy. To God, the only God, who saves us through Jesus Christ, our Lord, be the glory, majesty, authority and power, which he had before time began, now and forever. Amen.” (Jude 1: 24-25)

Christ is risen!

Dearly Beloved,

From the short letter of Saint Jude, *“Servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James,”* (1:1) we learn that already in the apostolic age, not all who considered themselves followers of Jesus were strong in their faith. I have chosen his letter, his epistle, as base text for this year’s pastoral message, because it so rightly defines our own times and our need to keep strong in our faith in Jesus Christ, risen from among the dead, whose resurrection we are glorifying.

In addition to the beautiful words of glorification of God at the conclusion of his very short letter, Jude is known for his fiery words of warning throughout the Letter. You will recall his phrase with which we are all familiar: *“...appeal to you to fight hard for the faith which has been once and for all entrusted to the saints”* (1:3). To fight hard for the faith, because: *“Certain people have infiltrated among you..., and they are the ones you had a warning about...for denying all religion”* (1:4). In other words, we may confess our faith with our lips but not with our lives in the society in which we are working out our salvation. Faith in the resurrection of all humanity is generally denied, if not in statement, then in deed.

Jude addresses these individuals as having violent language, vicious behavior and continues to state: *“the Lord will come with his saints in their tens of thousands, to pronounce judgement on all mankind and to sentence the wicked...for all the defiant things said against Him...”* (1:14-15). Are these words not appropriate for our own

day? This is why Jude's doxology to God for keeping us from falling and bringing us safe into God's glorious presence is so useful and powerful to keep us on the right path of the faith entrusted to us for all ages.

We, the Church, the Body of Christ, His Bride, are to care for one another, and all mankind, on our earthly journey. Thus, we are encouraged to love one another as our Lord Jesus Christ exhorts us. Saint Jude cautions us: "*When there are some who have doubts, reassure them; when there are some to be saved from the fire, pull them out; but there are others to whom you must be kind with great caution...*" (1:22-23), for our society is defiant of our Creator and Redeemer and of His resurrection from the dead.

Of course, judgement belongs to the Lord, and we, each of us, desires to be counted among those who will be "*safe in God's glorious presence*" (1:24). To reach this blessed existence without end, we must keep the faith, stay on the right path. Judgement, doubt not, there will be!

We are strengthened by the Saint's words of encouragement: "*But you, my dear friends, must use your most holy faith as your foundation and build on that, praying in the Holy Spirit...*" (1:20). Thus, our faith is not passive but active, for we are told to "build" on our faith, that is, build our lives on hope, the hope of eternal life; and this building, this earthly living, always in harmony with the movement of the Holy Spirit within us.

This letter of the Apostle has its acme in these words: "*...keep yourselves within the love of God and wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to give you eternal life!*" (1:21). These final four words are the foundation of this Pastoral Letter: God bestows eternal life; and this we know through the celebration of this day, the resurrection of our Lord and God and Savior from death, from the tomb, from annihilation!

Today is our day of celebration. As once we put on Christ in Holy baptism, going into the tomb with Him, so now we emerge from those cleansing waters into a new existence, "*innocent and happy*" (1:24) as those who are "*dear to God*"(1:1).

Truly, He is risen!

Accept our fatherly love and archpastoral blessings on those near and those far away.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+Nathaniel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

+NATHANIEL, Archbishop