

RESURRECTION PASTORAL LETTER 2009

+ NATHANIEL

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

To our 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.

“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”

Colossians 3:1-4

Christ is risen! Truly, he is risen!

Dearly Beloved:

By the mercy of God, we are blessed to celebrate and participate in the Great Feast of the Resurrection of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ. Having passed through the Great Paschal Fast, we are now in the long-awaited day of Spiritual Feasting. Today we are immersed in the unique celebration which draws earth up to heaven and heaven down to earth, when earthly and temporal matters are overshadowed by heavenly and eternal realities. Saint Peter reminds us: “... *we, according to his (Christ’s) promise, look for a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells*” (2 Peter 3:13).

Today’s celebration of the resurrection of Christ is also a celebration of our own future resurrection. This is the day of reconciliation between God and man brought about through Jesus Christ who is from eternity God and born in time and taking flesh of the Virgin Mary. Saint Paul in his letter to the Ephesians says: “*For he himself (Christ) is our peace, ...who has broken down the middle wall of separation...so as to create in himself one new man from the two, thus making peace and that he might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross*” [Ephesians 2:14]. As Christ has taken on our human nature, so too has he promised us a participation in the divine life. Saint Athanasius teaches that “*God became man so that man might become like God*” (On the Incarnation 54:3).

Our Holy Fathers believed that the Word of God became flesh; this means that the nature of God and the nature of man are united in one Person, our Lord Jesus Christ. What does this imply? That man can be divinized as Saint John says in his first letter: “*Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when he is revealed, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is*” (1 John 3:1-3).

Saint Simeon the New Theologian says: *“The beginning of life is its end and its end is for me the beginning. I know not from where I came nor do I know where I am and furthermore I know not where I, sinner that I am, will end up. I am born of the dust of the earth, flesh of flesh, corruption of corruption and being mortal, I exist in the body for a short time on this earth and then passing away I begin a different life. Into this earth I shed my body which will rise, and I will live a life without end.”* (949-1022)

It is toward this “life without end,” toward this “different life,” that we all are moving. Saint Paul reminds us through his Letter to the Ephesians that *“...when Christ who is our life appears, then we will appear with him in glory.”* It is on the second coming of Christ when there will be this “life without end” and mankind will be glorified that we must fix our eyes. This is another reason why we celebrate today: because our future existence will be one reflecting the divine glory of Christ in whom we base our earthly life. Hear what Paul states in Hebrews: *“What is man that you are mindful of him...you have crowned him with glory and honor”* (2:07).

Dearly beloved Christians, in each Divine Liturgy, we hear the words of the Apostle John: *“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life”* (John 3:16). What could be clearer than these words, that there is a promise of everlasting life? But the condition for this everlasting life is faith in Jesus Christ. Today we are called to witness to the world which God created, sustains and loves, that *“...Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep”* (1 Cor. 15:20); and further on, *“As we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly man, (Jesus Christ)”* (1 Cor.15:49).

Let us therefore rejoice and be exceedingly glad in the words of the Lord Jesus himself: *“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, though he may die, he shall live”* (John 11:25); and knowing and confessing that Christ “is sitting at the right hand of God,” let us live the days of our time on earth seeking that which is eternal and the gift of seeing God as he is, and thus cry out:

Christ is risen! Truly he is risen!

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

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+Nathaniel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, decorative initial 'N'.

+NATHANIEL, Archbishop