



THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA
THE ROMANIAN ORTHODOX EPISCOPATE OF AMERICA

The Most Reverend Dr. NATHANIEL Popp, Archbishop

**2025
PASTORAL LETTER**

RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD AND GOD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST

Beloved Spiritual Children in Christ:

Reverend Clergy, Devout Faithful, and Venerable Monastics of our God-protected Episcopate:

May God our Father and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ
Bestow on you His grace and peace, and from us, hierarchal blessings!

*"After that, He appeared to more than five hundred brothers at once,
most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep."*

1 Corinthians 15:6.

Dearly Beloved in our Risen Lord:

Christ is risen! Truly, He is risen!

This year, 2025, Orthodox Christians commemorate and celebrate the 1,700th anniversary of the First Ecumenical Council held in the year 325 in Nicaea at which the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ was confirmed as a matter of faith which through the ages Orthodox Christians had been confessing as the basis of belief in Jesus Christ as Redeemer of humankind.

We proclaim Christ's divinity. We confess that He suffered crucifixion, died, and was buried and that on the third day, He arose from the grave. According to Holy Scripture, His resurrection was witnessed by the Ointment-bearing Women, the Apostles, and by 500 "brothers" in the apostolic faith.

The Apostle Paul testifies in his First Letter to the Corinthians that there were "500 Brothers" who saw the resurrected Christ. Paul personally had the opportunity to know some of these 500, for he states "...some are still alive..." meaning he has met some of them, those "Brothers in the faith!"

Recently, in the earliest discovered house-church, intact mosaic floor tablets were revealed, on which was spelled out the testimony: "Jesus Christ is God!" These mosaics are more than a hundred years older than the Council of Nicaea. The ancient tiles offer a compelling witness to the evidence of the apostolic faith in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, as confessed by those 500 Brothers, by the rest of the earliest Christian assemblies, and by us today.

What does resurrection mean? It is a “new birth,” the Apostle Peter tells us in his First Letter. *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By His great mercy, He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead”* (1 Peter 1:3).

Saint John of Damascus enlightens us with his words, stating, *“We believe also in the resurrection of the dead. For there will be in truth a resurrection of the dead, and by resurrection we mean resurrection of bodies.”* [Exposition of the Orthodox Faith Bk 4, Ch 27]

The resurrection of Christ our Lord is a promise to all mankind, as Saint Theophilus of Antioch reminds us: *“God will raise your flesh immortal with your soul, and then, having become immortal, you will see the Immortal, if you now believe on Him.”* [Saint Theophilus of Antioch to Autolycus, Bk. 1, Ch 7. Mg 6, 1036]

What is this “living hope,” the gift of resurrection to all, of which Saint Peter wrote? Saint Theophilus continues to enlighten us, stating: *“To those who by patient continuance in well-doing seek immortality, He (God) will give life everlasting, peace, rest, and abundance of good things, which neither eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive.”* [(1 Cor 2:9) To Autolycus, Ch 1:14 MG 6,1045]

Be reminded that in the Creed, we do confess, “I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the age to come.” In other words, we believe and confirm that the resurrection will come to be for all humanity and that there is a new life to come.

This is why today we celebrate Christ’s resurrection from the grave, and by faith, we anticipate our own hope of eternal life, as Saint Cyril of Jerusalem reminds us: *“The root of all good works is the hope of the resurrection.”* [Catechesis No 18:1 MG 23:329]

So, Beloved, let us, by our lives, our good works, our hope in eternal life with God, and our constant confession of His divinity and resurrection, live in that hope. Let us today glorify our Savior, Jesus Christ, who is risen from the grave. Let us boldly proclaim to the anxious world,

“Christ is risen!” Truly, He is risen!”

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

†NATHANIEL

By the Mercy of God, Archbishop of Detroit
and The Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America and Canada
Orthodox Church in America