

2026
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!

“Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in his great mercy has given us a new birth as his sons, by raising Jesus Christ from the dead so that we may have a sure hope and the promise of an inheritance that can never... fade away” (1 Peter 1:3-4) for “Your dead will come to life, their corpses will rise; awake, exult!” (Isaiah 26:19).

Dearly Beloved in our Risen Lord:

Christ is risen! Truly, He is risen!

In the Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, we pray, “O God, you visited man in various ways; you sent prophets to us.” The prophet Isaiah, about the year 740 B.C., foretold the resurrection of the dead. Centuries later, the Apostle Peter praises God the Father for fulfilling that prophecy by raising his Son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus, from the dead. Peter, the other apostles, the women disciples, and 500 saw the risen Lord, and their lives were changed by what they witnessed: the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy and the Divine promise to all humanity of a resurrection and an eternal existence in the presence of God.

Saint Basil the Great, in his liturgy, thanks God, stating, “You did not forsake us...you sent your only begotten Son who loosed the bonds of death...he rose on the third day, having opened a path for all flesh to the resurrection from the dead.” (Divine Liturgy)

Saint John the Beloved Apostle informs us that on the day of the Lord’s resurrection from the tomb, Mary of Magdala saw and spoke with Christ, and on the same evening, he came to the disciples and spoke with them. Thomas, one of the Twelve, was not present. Eight days later, Christ again appeared to the Twelve when Thomas was among them, and he addressed him directly by name. The Lord addresses us also in our own time with these same words he addressed to Thomas.

Christ said, *“You believe because you see me. Happy are those who have not seen and yet believe.”* Saint Peter, the “Rock of Faith” in his First Letter to those living in Diaspora paraphrases Christ stating: *“You did not see him, yet you love him; and still without seeing him, you are already filled with a joy so glorious that it cannot be described, because you believe; and you are sure of the end to which your faith looks forward, that is, the salvation of your souls.”* (1 Peter 1:8,9)

The resurrection of our Savior is the Good News, the Gospel. This is the Good News that all humanity longed to hear! This is what we are celebrating, not only today but every day. Hearing this promise, our lives too must

change, knowing that the promise of resurrection to eternal life in Christ will be fulfilled in us and all mankind. Thus, our manner of living must reflect this belief in the Resurrected Lord, who is “judge of the living and the dead.” (Creed)

The Apostle John also assures us, and all humanity, that we too have a sure hope that we, like Christ, will be resurrected to an inheritance that can never fade away, that is, eternal life. The prophecy and this encouragement should give us the determination to live in a way that reflects our belief in that eternal life. Dearly beloved Christians, listen to this witness to life in Christ in the testimony of Saint John Chrysostom, (born in 347 A.D.) in the first years after the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus.

“As a very young Christian, Saint John was brought before the emperor. The emperor said to him that if John would not give up Christ, “I will banish you from the country, your father's land.” Saint John replied, “You cannot; the whole world is my Father's land.” The emperor then said, “I will take away all your property.” Saint John said, “You cannot; my treasures are in heaven.” The emperor said, “I will take you to a place where there is not a friend to speak to.” Saint John responded, “You cannot; I have a friend who sticks closer than a brother. I shall have my brother Jesus Christ forever.” But the emperor finally threatened, “I will take away your life.” Saint John replied, “You cannot; my life is there with God in Christ.”

These early-century audacious threats have been lived out in our own time by the victims of social communism, those saintly men and women whose witness is still fresh in our minds and hearts. Their witness, as Peter’s and the others through the centuries, and like Saint John’s bold witness, encourages us to live a life fully in Christ. Let us do so!

We live in lands of plenty; we have extraordinary communication with the wide world; we have freedom, but are our lives like those of the apostles? Of Saint John? Like those of our 20th-century martyrs? We say, “We have it made!” But what do we have if it is not a life lived in Christ with true belief in the promise of eternal life? Chrysostom exhorts us: “Come to Christ even at the last hour but come!” We have no excuse. Come all of us to the empty tomb.

Dearly beloved, let us wake up to the truth that we shall, each and all, die and take nothing with us except the inheritance that can never be taken away, eternal life. Let us pray the words that are stated in every Divine Liturgy: “Come, all faithful, let us worship the holy resurrection of Christ... for he destroyed death by his death.” Let us be strong in our personal confession that “I believe in the resurrection of the dead and of the age to come” (Creed), because Christ is risen as he foretold!

“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