

His Eminence
The Most Reverend
Metropolitan JOSEPH

The Right Reverend
Bishop THOMAS



Archbishop of New York and
Metropolitan of
All North America

Diocese of Oakland, Charleston,
and the Mid-Atlanti

ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE
OF NORTH AMERICA

Pentecost 2020

Beloved brother Hierarchs, Reverend Clergy, God-fearing Monastics,
and all my Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ our True God:

As we prepare to celebrate the great feast of Pentecost we are reminded of the words of our holy father Gregory Palamas:

He is not just everywhere, but also above all, not just in every age and time, but before them all. And, according to the promise, the Holy Spirit will not just be with us until the end of the age, but rather will stay with those who are worthy in the age to come, making them immortal and filling their bodies as well with eternal glory, as the Lord indicated by telling His disciples, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever" (John 14:16).

Saint Gregory Palamas describes for us our destiny, if only we abide in continual repentance. In the afterglow of holy Pascha and the Lord's glorious Ascension, we return to our life of repentance so that we may abide with the thrice holy God forever in the eternal kingdom. This is why we conclude the services on Pentecost Sunday with Vespers and the kneeling prayers. I encourage you to read the kneeling prayers prior to Sunday's service. They are profound and demonstrate for us how we are to live our daily lives. In these prayers, we are taught how to pray. Here is an excerpt from the 1st Prayer:

Hear us who pray to you, and remember us. Turn back the captivity of our souls and receive us as we return to you. We have sinned, yet we have been cast upon your mercy from our childhood. Our days have been spent in vanities and thus we have been deprived of every defense. Emboldened by your compassion, we call out: Remember not the sins of our youth and ignorance, and cleanse us of our secret sins. When our strength fails, do not forsake us. Help us to return to you before it is too late. Measure our sins according to your compassion, and look down upon all of us assembled here today. Visit us with your goodness. Deliver us from the power of the devil. Preserve our lives in your commandments. Gather us all into your Kingdom. Forgive those who hope in you. Purify us by your Holy Spirit, and destroy the traps set for us by the Enemy.

The 2nd Prayer is addressed to the Lord Christ and asks for the gifts of the Holy Spirit so that we may never be separated from Him. The final prayer includes a beautiful remembrance of our beloved reposed.

It is in these prayers that we are taught our right relationship to the thrice holy God, creation, and one another. If we incorporate the words and spirit of these prayers in our daily lives we will be able to live in humble repentance throughout the year without anxiety, without agitation, and without confusion.

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

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*O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, Who art everywhere and fillest all things;
Treasury of Blessings, and Giver of Life: come and abide in us, and cleanse us from every
impurity, and save our souls, O Good One.*

May the most holy Panagia protect you and the thrice holy God save you!

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bishop Thomas". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a cross at the beginning.

Rt. Rev. Bishop THOMAS (Joseph)
Auxiliary Bishop, Diocese of Oakland, Charleston, and the Mid-Atlantic

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