

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-Atlantic

ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA

September 14, 2017
Exaltation of the Life-Giving Cross

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

I greet you on this most joyous feast, the Universal Exaltation of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross. It is through this sign that we Christians conquer the passions and the evil in the world. Love conquers all. Saint Gregory Palamas reminds us,

This is the wisdom and power of God: to be victorious through weakness, exalted through humility, rich through poverty. Not only the word and the mystery of the Cross are divine and to be revered, but so also is its sign. For it is a holy, saving, and venerable seal, able to hallow and perfect all the good, marvelous and indescribable things which God has done for the human race. It can take away the curse and condemnation, destroy corruption and death, bestow eternal life and blessing. It is the wood of salvation, the regal scepter, the divine trophy of victory over visible and invisible enemies, even though the heretics' followers are insanely displeased. They have not attained to the apostle's prayer that "they might be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth, and length, and height, and depth" (Eph. 3:18). They have not understood that the Lord's Cross discloses the entire dispensation of His coming in the flesh, and contains within it the whole mystery of this dispensation. Extending in all directions, it embraces everything above, below, around and between. The heretics abhor the sign of the King of Glory (Ps. 24:7-10), putting forward an excuse, in accordance with which, if they were reasonable, they ought to reverence the Cross along with us. The Lord Himself, when He was going to ascend the Cross, openly referred to it as His lifting up and His glory (John 3:14-15). And He announced that when He came again and manifested Himself, this sign of the Son of man would come with power and great glory (Matt. 24:30). ...

Inclining our hearts as well as bending our knees, come, "let us worship," with David the psalmist and prophet, "at the place where His feet stood" (Ps. 132:7 LXX), where His all-embracing hands were outspread and His life-giving body was stretched out for our sake. As we reverence and greet the Cross with faith, let us draw and keep the abundant sanctification flowing from it. Then, at the sublimely glorious future advent of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ, as we see Him come in glory, we shall rejoice and skip for joy unceasingly, having attained to a place on His right hand and heard the promised joyful words and blessing, to the glory of the Son of God crucified in the flesh for us.

In the Precious and Life-giving Cross, we have life and love. The power of the Cross conquers all, overcomes all. Let us rejoice in it and share in it!

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bishop Thomas".

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

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