



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF CHICAGO
ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΣΙΚΑΓΟΥ

NATHANAEL

By the grace of God, Metropolitan of the Holy Metropolis of Chicago

Pascha 2018

To the Reverend Clergy, Monastic Communities, and blessed people of the
Holy Metropolis of Chicago.

Beloved fathers and brethren,

Beloved children in the Lord of the Metropolis of Chicago,

During this joyous and triumphant season of the Resurrection of Christ, as I extend to all of you my festal and paternal embrace, I greet each of you personally with the most profound message in history:

CHRIST IS RISEN!

Together, as a metropolis family, we glorify the Risen Christ “with all our soul and all our heart” because we have been found worthy, especially this year, to celebrate His Resurrection, having also received a foretaste of the joy and grace of Pentecost. Our Pentecost preceded the feasts of Pentecost and the Resurrection, and we remain with the same feeling shared by the Apostles on that day when they descended from the upper room of Jerusalem. During these last few weeks, the Holy Spirit—just as in the early days of Christianity—illuminated and guided the successors of the Apostles as they elected your new Metropolitan, and through the mystery of the Archpriesthood, the Spirit also descended to ordain your new Chief-Shepherd and to enthrone him in his holy see. I express my gratitude to all of you for your prayers and concerns during the period following the repose of Metropolitan Iakovos of blessed memory. I particularly thank you for your participation and your expressions of love during the recent important days in our local Church, namely, my hierarchal ordination and my enthronement.

As one body of clergy and laity you revealed how worthy indeed you are to partake in both Pentecost and the Resurrection. You are worthy to receive both the joy that flows from the universal message of Christ's Resurrection and the most beautiful harmony that emanates from the Holy Spirit on Pentecost.

On these blessed days, a passage from Saint Paul's Letter to the Ephesians comes to mind. Therein, as the Apostle to the Nations speaks of the Resurrection of Christ, he notes: "Now, that [Christ] ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same who also ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fulfill all things" (Eph. 4: 9-10). Through these words of the Apostle we understand the magnitude of Jesus Christ's journey between two extremes: the descent into Hades—the lowermost point—and the ascent into the heavenly throne of God—the uppermost point. The cosmos stands in awe as it faces the height and depth of the mystery of our salvation, and through this mystery, we perceive the extent of Christ's love for the world.

Christ descends into Hades and announces the gospel of salvation to "those held captive." On that day, we all experience the pain of the Cross in silence. Indeed, during the silence of Holy Friday we do not celebrate the Holy Eucharist because the entire world is in mourning and plunges into the silence of its heart. For man, it is a day of mourning; however, for Hades, Pascha has already commenced. Death has already been conquered and eternal life has been proclaimed. And Christ, following this perfect descent to the deepest corners, emerges, not merely from the grave, but from the dead. Christ is vested in glory! And on the day of the Resurrection, His halo, as depicted in Orthodox iconography, is not limited to His head, but surrounds His entire body. This indicates that Christ has already reached the glory of heaven, even as He lifts Adam and Eve from Hades.

My beloved children,

I consider you all my friends and my brethren, and I invite you to walk with me as we confront our common struggles, and in so doing, reach the height of God's Kingdom together. You need my help, and I need yours—we need each other. The choice of isolation and self-centeredness leads to the deepest point of corruption—Hades. The choice of unity and love leads to the other end of the spectrum, namely, the glory of the Risen Christ. Come, therefore, let us walk together

for His glory and for the glory of our Church. As I urged you on the day of my enthronement, let us unite and walk together on this new day for our local Church.

As I embrace all of you—clergy, monastics, and pious faithful of the Metropolis of Chicago—I pray that your life, your family’s life, and your Godly works may abound with the joy of the Risen Christ.

With Paschal prayers and paternal love,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Metropolitan Nathanael". The script is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and "N".

† Metropolitan Nathanael of Chicago