

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, 2021

Elevation of the Holy Cross

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

For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. (1 Cor. 1:18, 22-24)

“Honorably and righteously venerate the Cross of Christ,” St. Dimitry of Rostov, the Russian Chrysostom, says in his homily on the Elevation, “for by this blessed Tree was death slain and life granted. By the tree of Paradise we were killed, and by the Tree of the Cross we are revived; by the first we were expelled from Paradise, by the second we ascend to Heaven; by the first the enemy defeated us, by the second we defeat the enemies.”

How are we to respond to the sacrificial act of divine love? King David provides us with the appropriate response - What shall I render unto the Lord for all the good that He has rendered unto me? (Ps. 115:3). He does not need our goods (cf. Ps. 15:2). A sacrifice unto God is a broken spirit, a heart that is broken and humbled, God will not despise (Ps. 50:19). From the Cross He stretches out His most pure, crucified arms and meekly calls to us, My son! Give me thy heart (Prov. 23:26). Everything has been done for our happiness. It is up to us to respond to this tender summons: Ready is my heart, O God, ready is my heart (Ps. 56:8), and we call to Thee: Before Thy Cross, we bow down, O Master, and Thy holy resurrection we glorify! Amen.

On this feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, let us offer to God the one sacrifice He humbly asks of us - a humble and contrite heart. We may do this by offering our lives, each and every day, as repentance for our lack of love and gratitude to God. In this fashion, the Cross of Christ will be exalted and reign in our hearts spiritually, conquering all the passions lurking within the deep recesses of our hearts.

A blessed feast to all and may the thrice-holy God save you and give you strength through the power of His precious cross!

Yours in Christ,

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)

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