

His Eminence  
The Most Reverend  
Metropolitan SABA

The Right Reverend  
Bishop ANTHONY



Archbishop of New York and  
Metropolitan of  
All North America

Diocese of Los Angeles  
And the West

## Great and Holy Pascha 2025 – Reflections on the Glorious Resurrection of our Lord

Beloved Clergy and Faithful of the Diocese of Los Angeles and the West,

**المسيح قام! حقًا قام!**

**Christ is Risen! Indeed, He is Risen!**

**¡Cristo ha resucitado! ¡En verdad ha resucitado!**

Death is not normal. It is not a part of the life cycle. Even though it says in Ecclesiastes: *“For everything there is a season, a time to be born and a time to die”* (3.2a), the Christian considers it to be unfinished business! Christians challenge death in a fight to the death. That is the whole meaning of Lazarus Saturday, when Christ strikes the first blow in that ultimate contest. Death, it says in the hymns, *“is put on notice.”* We don’t explain death; we exterminate it. The whole Gospel is shouting: Christ is Risen! We win!

Okay, the part of physically dying remains until our Lord’s Second Coming (for Christians, coming from the words of our Lord, we call our physical death *“falling asleep in the Lord”*). But that is not to die, really. Jesus said: *“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit”* (John 12:24). Christ died and rose again and is *“The first fruits, then, at His coming, those who belong to Christ”* (1 Corinthians 15:23). After we are buried, we bloom!

*“God did not make death, and He does not delight in the death of the living”* (Wisdom of Solomon 1:3). *“God created man for incorruption and made him the image of His own eternity,”* or nature, (Wisdom of Solomon 2:23). In other words, God made us in the image of His Son. That’s why God, in Christ, could become like us when He was born of the Theotokos. We are alike, and we look alike!

God wants to give us everything He has given to His Son, because He sees Christ’s resemblance in us. All Our Lord’s familiar features are in us. *“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him”* (1 Corinthians 2:9; Isaiah 64:4).

It says movingly and powerfully in the hymns of the Great and Holy Week, and especially in Matins of Holy Thursday, that Our Lord came from heaven to earth, becoming one of us, to look for us. *“Adam, where are you?”* He cried, *“where are my beloved ones, all my loved ones?”* Christ suffered so much as He went searching for us through the thicket and thorns of the world become wilderness because of sin. He had to cut His own trail, make His own path through the swamp of sin to build a road for our salvation. He was scourged, scratched and scorched, beaten and bloodied, wounded and killed.

*“The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch”* (Acts 11: 26)

But He wouldn't stop looking until He found us, helpless in Hades. Thus, He took us by the hands and raised us up, out of the darkness and shadows of death, into the bright sunshine of the "*never ending Day of His Kingdom,*" when He rose again on Pascha Sunday.

Death is not a final farewell. It is a family reunion "*with the spirits of the righteous made perfect.*" And it is a joyful greeting: I couldn't wait to be with you again – and forever and ever!"

May the message of our Resurrected Lord always live in our minds and hearts.

Yours in the Risen Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Bishop Anthony". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

+Bishop ANTHONY

**Bishop of Los Angeles**

**Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America**