

RESURRECTION PASTORAL LETTER 2016

+ NATHANIEL

**By the Mercy of God and the Will of the People, Archbishop of Detroit and
the Romanian Episcopate of the Orthodox Church in America**

To our beloved clergy, monastics and pious faithful
of our God-protected Episcopate,
Grace, Mercy and Peace from God,
and from us our fatherly love and hierarchal blessing.

Dearly Beloved:

CHRIST IS RISEN!

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from among the dead is the kernel of Christian faith. This is the early announcement of the Church; and it is the same today, and must be until the Lord comes once again.

Everything we believe, all that we teach, each creed we recite has the resurrection as the starting point. The importance of this witness cannot be understated.

St. Stephen, the first martyr, said in prayer at his stoning, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” (Acts 7:59). By this simple statement, he confirmed that he believed Jesus to be alive after his death, and that he had the power of forgiving sins; because he also said, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them” (Acts 7:60).

This earliest of witnesses confirms what was in the hearts and on the lips of all the followers of Christ: that he was alive and sitting on his throne of power in the heavens; that he was both God and man. This is the statement of Paul who was present at the stoning of Stephen: “Jesus not only died for us – he rose from the dead, and there at God’s right hand, he stands and pleads for us” (Romans 8:34).

The early community continued to witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus with great power, and they were all given great grace (Acts 4:33). They came together on the weekly day of the resurrection and prayed and sang with one

heart and one mind. They received communion, sharing in one bread and one cup as a single body.

Today, these thousands of years later, the Church, the community of believers is still doing the same thing: proclaiming the risen Lord and sharing in the partaking of his body and blood. We come together at least once each week to confirm our belief in the Lord Jesus and his resurrection from the dead. All should come forward to the altar to receive his precious gifts to us: eternal life.

Sometimes, we grow cool; we may forget the wonderful promises God has made to us. Our daily lives are filled with the cares and burdens of this life and concern for tomorrow. All of us need the Sunday celebration of the Lord's resurrection; and, we especially need the annual great celebration of Holy Pascha that reminds us of the power of God and of his intention to come again.

The Lord promised his Holy Spirit to all who receive holy baptism. Jesus himself said that he is with us until the end of time. Thus, every man in every age can be sure that the witness of the early disciples is the same in the Church today, and that every man must hear this "good news" and live by it.

For those who need encouragement, listen to the words of St. Peter: "Without having seen him, you love him; though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with unutterable and exalted joy. As the outcome of your faith, you obtain the salvation of your souls" (1 Peter 1:8-9).

Let these words be our guide for the wonderful days when we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord. Let them also be our continuous reminder that belief in the resurrection is the key to the salvation of our souls and life eternal.

Christ is risen! Truly, he is risen!

May his resurrection bring you all the heavenly blessings promised to us and realized through the coming of our Lord on earth.

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

+NATHANIEL, Archbishop