



Orthodox Church in America
DIOCESE OF THE MIDWEST

2 June 2022
The Ascension of the Lord
№. 64

**ARCHPASTORAL MESSAGE ON THE OCCASION OF THE FORTIETH DAY OF
THE REPOSE OF ARCHBISHOP PAUL OF BLESSED MEMORY**

To the Reverend Clergy, Venerable Monastics, and Beloved Faithful of the Diocese of Chicago and the Midwest,

Beloved Fathers, Sisters and Brothers,

In speaking to Mary Magdalene on the day of His Resurrection, the Lord Jesus said, “Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God’” (John 20:17).

As He ascends and takes His place at the Father’s right hand, the Risen Lord also opens to us the way to paradise. In reflecting upon this mystery of the Lord’s Ascension, Saint John Chrysostom writes,

“We who seemed unworthy of the earth, are now raised to heaven. We who were unworthy of even earthly dominion have been raised to the kingdom on high, we have ascended higher than heaven, and have come to occupy the very throne of the king. The same human nature from which the angels guarded Paradise has not stopped until it ascended the throne of the Lord. By His Ascension, the Lord not only opened for us the entrance to heaven. He not only appeared before the face of God on our behalf and for our sake, but likewise transported us with Himself to the highest places.”

On this Feast of the Ascension, we see the Lord disappearing from our sight as He ascends and calling after us to be His witnesses and to follow Him into the Kingdom. Today, we also commemorate the Fortieth Day of the falling-asleep of your dear archpastor and my brother and concelebrant, His Eminence Archbishop Paul. That he was called from this earthly life to life in the Kingdom on the chosen and holy day of Pascha will always be memorable and worthy of note. What a blessing for His Eminence, after having suffered his own personal Golgotha, to have also experienced his own Pascha. To rephrase Saint John Chrysostom, “The Lord honored [him] whom He loved by putting [him] close to the Father.”

As we gather in our parish churches to celebrate the Lord's Ascension and as we prayerfully remember Archbishop Paul on the Fortieth Day of his repose, we see the gates of Paradise opened by the Lord—opened to Archbishop Paul and, hopefully, to us all. Today we profess our common faith that those who have faithfully followed the Lord in their earthly lives will also follow Him into the Kingdom He has revealed to us.

With love in the Lord,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Daniel". The plus sign is a simple cross, and the name "Daniel" is written in a cursive, flowing script.

+DANIEL

Bishop of Santa Rosa

Locum Tenens of the Diocese of the Midwest