



Orthodox Church in America
DIOCESE OF THE MIDWEST

Thursday, 17 April 2025
Great and Holy Thursday
№. 50

ARCHPASTORAL GREETINGS OF
THE MOST REVEREND DANIEL
ARCHBISHOP OF CHICAGO AND THE MIDWEST

ON THE BRIGHT AND JOYOUS FEAST OF PASCHA - 20 APRIL 2025

**Beloved Very Reverend and Reverend Clergy, Monastics, and Faithful
of the God-protected Diocese of Chicago and the Midwest:**

✠ CHRIST IS RISEN! ✠

Before the dawn Mary and the women came and found the stone rolled away from the tomb. They heard the angelic voice: "Why do you seek among the dead as a Man the One Who is everlasting Light? Behold the clothes in the grave! Go and proclaim to the world: "The Lord is risen! He has slain death, as He is the Son of God, saving the race of men!"

-Paschal Hours

"You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen!" (Mark 16:6). With these words, the heaven-sent messenger, robed in light, addressed the Holy Myrrhbearing Women who, on that first day of the week, came looking for the tomb of Jesus. In spite of the possibility of great personal harm, their love for the Lord compelled them to come to the tomb to honor His body with a proper Jewish burial. Their deep sorrow was overpowered by their love and care for their Master. On this same "first day of the week," we, too, come seeking the Lord and likewise hear and rejoice in those very words: "He is risen; He is not here."

As Orthodox Christians, we believe that Jesus is not an historic figure from the past, a person whose life and deeds are to be remembered in history books. Yes, He performed wondrous works and healed the sick and suffering and raised the dead. He was betrayed by a friend, brutally beaten and crucified. He died on a cross and was buried in a borrowed tomb. But that is where mere historical facts come to an end. The tomb could not contain Him. He is risen and the tomb is empty! We believe and confess that He lives, is present among us, and walks before us and beside us as one who is alive, as one who calls us to follow Him on the path of eternal life.

Christ is risen! At Pascha we rejoice because Christ did not remain in the tomb, his body did not see corruption (How could the Author of Life be subject to corruption?) Christ belongs to the world of the living, not to the world of the dead; we rejoice because he is the Alpha and the Omega, the

Beginning and the End, the Source and the Fulfillment of all life. He lives not only yesterday, but is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8).

Christ is risen! But somehow this great reality and wondrous mystery of Christ's Resurrection is situated so far outside our own human experience that, looking inwardly, we find ourselves discussing the same question asked by the disciples coming down from Mount Tabor: What exactly does this "rising from the dead" mean? What does it mean for us? What does it mean for all human history? In attempting to answer this line of questioning, we must begin by admitting that Christ's Resurrection is something more, something different. It is a leap into a completely new order which concerns not only ourselves personally, but the whole of human history.

Christ is risen! Because of His love for us, Jesus could allow himself to die upon a cross. We must recognize, however, that by doing so he broke the seeming finality of death, because in Him the eternal finality of life was present. His death on the cross formed a new reality with life, in such a way that life is the definitive reality.

Christ is risen! In the Gospel of John, Jesus says to his disciples "*I live, and you will also live* (John 14:19). We will live because of our union with the Risen Lord, our Savior. We live and will continue to live through having been united to the One who is life itself. Eternal life and blessed immortality is a gift to us that is ours through our relationship with Christ, the Conqueror of Death. Eternal life comes to us because we have been loved by Him who is Life. He loves us so much that He died on the cross and rose from the dead for us and for our salvation.

Christ is risen! Thus, we can sing full of joy, together with the Church, in the words of the Paschal Troparion:

"Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death. And upon those in the tombs bestowing life... And unto us He has given eternal life. Let us worship His Resurrection on the third day!"

I extend my joyous best wishes to you all, asking the Risen Lord to bless you, your families, friends, and all your loved ones with His continuing, life-giving presence in your lives.

With love in the Risen Lord,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Daniel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'D'.

DANIEL

Archbishop of Chicago and the Midwest