



ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA
DIOCESE OF NEW YORK & NEW JERSEY

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ARCHPASTORAL LETTER FOR THE FEAST OF HOLY PASCHA 2026

Protocol No. 01-002/2026
Holy Pascha, April 12, 2026

Beloved Members of our Diocesan Family:
Christ is Risen! – Indeed He is Risen!

*“Let us offer to Him Who suffered and rose again for us ...
ourselves, the possession most precious to God and most
proper. Let us become like Christ, since Christ became like us.”*
– Saint Gregory the Theologian, *Oration 45*.

On this joyous Feast of Feasts, I greet all of you in the unbridled joy of the Resurrection. As we celebrate the greatest miracle in human history, we bathe in the radiant light of the empty tomb – the victory of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ: not only a victory over death and the grave ... but a victory of light over darkness, good over evil, love over hatred, and salvation over sin. Pascha is indeed the inauguration of a new creation.

We have been preparing for this transformation of life during the Lenten Season that has just concluded. The Great Fast was not merely a time of dietary restriction, but a profound time of spiritual formation – a “springtime of the soul” – designed to realign our lives with the Risen Lord. As the hymns of our Church teach us, we have prepared our hearts to move from the darkness of sin to the light of new life, following the path of repentance that leads to the Paschal Feast.

While the fast from meat and dairy foods has ceased with the celebration of the Paschal Liturgy, still, we must not cease fighting temptations, controlling the passions and resisting sin in all its forms. One of the great gifts of Holy Pascha is the promise of forgiveness. St. John Chrysostom challenges us in his famous Paschal Homily: *“Let no one mourn that he has fallen again and again, for forgiveness has risen from the grave.”* This forgiveness is not a license to fall back into sinful habits, but the grace of encouragement and strength to rise above them.

The battle against passions – pride, anger, lust, greed – is not limited to the forty days of Lent. We must maintain our vigil. We must continue to abstain from sinful words, deeds, and thoughts. We cannot let the tongue that sings “Christ is Risen!” return to gossiping, slandering, or speaking falsehoods. We must never cease waging war against our passions. As the Holy Fathers teach, the struggle against our lower nature is a constant act of love for our loving Lord.

Likewise, we must continue our spiritual labors. The hunger for God that we nurtured in Lent through prayer and reading the Scripture should not diminish. We must maintain the prayer rule blessed by our spiritual father, faithfully, each and every day. We must not diminish our commitment to Christ – the progress that we have made, by more frequently attending divine services and receiving the Sacraments.

Christ the High Priest awaits us from the altar ... His priceless gift of the Eucharist is offered at every Liturgy. As Christ is the Bread of Life, we must continue to feed upon Him, not just occasionally but continually. We must also not become lax in the daily reading of the Holy Scriptures, a “love letter to you from the King of Heaven,” in the words of St. Tikhon of Zadonsk. We need the guidance of the Word of God to navigate each day of our life’s journey.

Finally, true Paschal joy is shared. The help we offer our brothers and sisters in need must not stop. If we truly believe in the Resurrection, we must see the Risen Christ in the face of every person, especially the poor and marginalized. The sharing of our time and talent and treasure must continue in our parish church. And the generosity of our stewardship, gained from the abundance we have received from the hands of our Heavenly Father, must find its expression in our sacrificial almsgiving to the work of the ministries of Christ’s holy Church.

Our ultimate goal, my beloved, remains *theosis* – growing in the divine likeness, becoming more and more like Christ, following the examples of the Saints, striving to truly be more godly. We are called through the grace of the Holy Spirit to be “*partakers of the divine nature*” (II Peter 1:4), transforming our earthly journey into an inheritance in the Heavenly Kingdom.

Indeed, let us carry the Paschal fire in our hearts every day of the year – revealing to all those we meet, by the way we live, what Seraphim of Sarov proclaimed daily by His saintly example: *Christ is Risen! – Indeed He is Risen!*

May the joy of this Feast abide with you in your hearts and in your homes always!

With my humble prayers, my archpastoral blessing, and my sincere love,

+ Archbishop Michael

Archbishop of New York and the Diocese of New York and New Jersey