

His Eminence  
The Most Reverend  
Metropolitan JOSEPH

The Right Reverend  
Bishop THOMAS



Archbishop of New York and  
Metropolitan of  
All North America

Diocese of Oakland, Charleston,  
and the Mid-Atlantic

ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE  
OF NORTH AMERICA

September 8, 2018  
Nativity of the Theotokos

Beloved brother Hierarchs, Reverend Clergy, God-fearing Monastics, and all my Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ our True God:

I greet each of you on this most joyous feast of the Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos. On this feast we reflect upon the wonders of the thrice-holy God who provides a child to the barren couple and the foretaste of our salvation.

Saint Andrew of Crete writes:

The present feastday is for us the beginning of feastdays. Serving as boundary limit to the law and to foretypes, it at the same time serves as a doorway to grace and truth. “For Christ is the end of the law” (Rom 10:4), Who, having freed us from the writing, doth raise us to spirit. Here is the end (to the law): in that the Lawgiver, having made everything, hath changed the writing in spirit and doth head everything within Himself (Eph 1:10), hath taken the law under its dominion, and the law is become subjected to grace, such that the properties of the law not suffer reciprocal commingling, but only suchlike, that the servile and subservient (in the law) by Divine power be transmuted into the light and free (in grace), “so that we—sayeth the Apostle—be not enslaved to the elements of the world” (Gal 4:3) and be not in a condition under the slavish yoke of the writing of the law. Here is the summit of Christ’s beneficence towards us! Here are the mysteries of revelation! Here is the theosis [divinization] assumed upon humankind—the fruition worked out by the God-man.

The radiant and bright coming-down of God for people ought to possess a joyous basis, opening to us the great gift of salvation. Suchlike also is the present feastday, having as its basis the Nativity of the Mother of God, and as its purposive end—the uniting of the Word with flesh, this most glorious of all miracles, unceasingly proclaimed, immeasurable and incomprehensible. (Discourse on the Nativity of the Most Holy Mother of God)

May God grant you a blessed Feast!

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bishop Thomas".

Rt. Rev. Bishop THOMAS (Joseph)  
Auxiliary Bishop, Diocese of Oakland, Charleston, and the Mid-Atlantic

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

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