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The Cathedral Messenger

A Publication of St. George Antiochian Orthodox Christian Cathedral

Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen!





By the mercy of God Almighty
John X
Patriarch of Antioch and All the East
to

**My brothers, Pastors of the Holy Church of Antioch
My sons and daughters, everywhere across this Apostolic See**

*"Let us love the Bridegroom, O brethren, and prepare our lamps,
shining with the virtues and a right faith; that, like the wise virgins of the Lord,
we may be ready to enter with Him into the wedding feast.
For as God He granteth unto all the Bridegroom's gift; an incorruptible crown."*

This is the Church's prayer on these days of Holy Week, uttered by the hymnographer, where she addresses every soul that longs for the thresholds of Resurrection. We hereby extend it to you my brethren, for thorough reflection, while you accompany us in prayer from the corners of your homes and the cores of your souls. Today, a few steps away from Resurrection, we call on you to accompany the Bridegroom, the One who dwells in the empty tomb. We invite you to contemplate Christ Jesus, whom the hymnographer designates as the Bridegroom of the soul. Let us put everything aside. Let us put all the worries and epidemics of the whole world; let us, for a moment, lose sight of worldly communication and media. There, in the depths of our soul, let us behold Christ, who is treading the path to the Golgotha and the Resurrection. And let us love Him. Let us wash Him, sprinkle Him with the myrrh of our love for Him, with the fragrance of our love for each other. Let us shed before Him our tears of love and gratitude, for He is suffering the Passion for the sake of our salvation.

We are called in the quietness of the heart, from the corners of our homes, to light up our hearts before the Lord of the hearts, as we pour the oil of patience before His divine Light. We are called to pour out the oil of mercy and charity, and to light our lamp of Pascha, first and foremost with the oil of repentance and with the quietude of the heart, in contrition before the Crucified Lord. We are called to quench the heart with the dew of prayer and to purify the soul from all conceit, presenting it to Him, to Christ, as a pure bridal chamber. On Holy Friday, we are called to reflect how the dawn of the Resurrection followed the bitter wailing. So much wailing and restlessness affect us times and again: wars, distress, epidemics! However, our consolation is that the Lord wipes out every tear from our eyes, looking down from the height of his Cross and embracing our hearts with the light of His Glorious Resurrection.

Christ is our new Pascha; He is the Bridegroom of the virgin soul that expels all the worries and worldly vanities from her depths and heart. Hence, she may acquire Christ as the Bridegroom who sanctifies the inner being and pours out His mercies. Let us be aware and keep in mind that the Lord loves the souls that long for Him and pours out His peace over the whole world. Let us know in our hearts that the Resurrection is first and foremost a resurrection of the soul, filled with love for God and the neighbor. The present circumstance is but an occasion to express our love for the Bridegroom of the soul and our love for His creation. Wherever we may be, we pray to God the Father of Mercies and Lord of all Comfort, that He sends His peace and displaces the heavy tombstone. Then our souls may shine in the light of the Resurrection.

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We pray today for all those who are in suffering and pain, for the hungry and those who worry about their destiny. May the Triumphant Christ resurrect them from distress. We also pray for the departed who died during the new epidemic and for those who are struck by it; may they be cured. We pray for those who watch over the recovery of the sick and for those who work day and night to fight it. May the Almighty Lord protect them with His care and providence. We pray for peace in the East and all the world, and for the return of all the kidnapped, including our two brothers, the Bishops of Aleppo, Youhanna Ibrahim and Paul Yazji, who were abducted during this season, seven years ago. We repeat again and again that it tears our hearts, even more than the kidnapping, to see the global and international indifference for their cause, which represents only a slight example of the displacement, killing, terrorism, and kidnapping suffered by the human being of the East.

From the Church of Antioch, the message of the Gospel went out to the world two thousand years ago. It is the Church of Antioch who brought the light of the Gospel to the world. Our ancestors were first and foremost messengers of love and faith. They were messengers of the Resurrection and joy. They poured into their lives and extended to all whom they encountered the joy of the gospel of Resurrection, the hope of Resurrection and its victory, at all times and places, despite the circumstances and adversities. Besides, they were always on good terms with their neighbors. They did not melt down as a minority, nor did they segregate themselves, confining their horizons to a glorified past or a blessed present. They never got inebriated by some protection obtained here and there. Rather, their strength stemmed from the power of their faith in Christ; their hope was woven from the unity of their testimony to Him, from their adherence and loyalty to Him throughout the ages. We hope to always remain united, joining our acts and hearts, despite the adversity that besets us.

Today we pray the Lord of Life, our Lord Jesus Christ, to embrace the souls of those who preceded us into the hope of Resurrection and eternal life. We address our prayer to the Crucified Christ, the Master of hope and the Lord of Resurrection, the Bridegroom of the soul, the Merciful Providence, may He send his divine consolation to our hearts and to the hearts of all humankind, who is seeking the dawn of Resurrection from every ordeal.

We extend the peace of Pascha to you, our children in the homeland and overseas; may the Glorious Christ crown your life with the hope of Resurrection so that, in the winter of these times, the spring of His salvation shines with bountiful days of heavenly joy and divine consolation comes your way. Then we shall sing with united tongues and hearts:

Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and on those in the tombs bestowing life!

From our Patriarchate in Damascus

April 17, 2020

His Eminence
The Most Reverend
Metropolitan JOSEPH



Archbishop of New York and
Metropolitan of
All North America

ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE
OF NORTH AMERICA

Great and Holy Pascha 2020

*Before the symbolical ark, David, God's forefather, did leap and dance.
Let us, therefore, the holy people, seeing the fulfillment of these symbols,
rejoice with divine rejoicing; for Christ the Almighty is risen.*

Fourth Ode of the Paschal Canon

Christ is Risen! Indeed, He is Risen!

Reverend Clergy, Esteemed Parish Council members and beloved faithful:

During this bright feast of Holy Pascha, let us not be cast down with thoughts of what we lack but filled with divine rejoicing at all that Christ the Almighty has bestowed on us. No longer do we need an Ark or a Temple to come into the presence of God for Christ has descended into Hades and risen from the dead, "that He might fill all things with Himself." No longer do we fear death for Christ is the "First-born from the dead" and "He shall be all things, the first in all things."

Beloved in Christ, although we have spent these days in physical distance from one another, let us nevertheless dance and leap for joy at the Resurrection of Christ unites each one of us to God, to one another, and to the inhabitants of the heavens.

With fervent prayers for a joyous feast of Pascha and a hastening of that day when we will gather together once again in our churches, I remain,

Yours in the Risen Lord,

+JOSEPH

Archbishop of New York and Metropolitan of all North America

"The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch" (Acts 11: 26)

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This Moment in Time

By Fr. Paul O'Callaghan

It is a common for one to hear observations of how strange this time of COVID-19 shutdown has been. "Strange", "weird", and "surreal" are the words most frequently heard. The coronavirus arrived on our shores, and before we knew what had hit us, our lives were yanked out from under us. Even though the disease itself has so far had a very limited effect locally, the implantation of stay-at-home orders had dramatic consequences. Businesses were shuttered. Commerce stalled. Church life ground to a halt, except for a handful of clergy live-streaming Divine Worship.

Our Centennial Year of 2018 was highly eventful at St. George Cathedral. I won't recount everything that took place, but the highlights were definitely our Centennial Celebration with Metropolitan Joseph, and the production of "The First 100 Years" commemorative book. By late 2018, construction was underway at the Cathedral and that continued through the bulk of 2019. The remodel project that dominated that year had a double effect on parish life. On one hand, it made for a tremendous amount of activity and busyness. Creativity and industriousness fully energized those involved in the ongoing construction process. On the other hand, familiar staples of our community life had to be put on hold: weekday services, coffee hour, Presanctified Dinners, and the Annual Dinner itself.

Construction was largely wrapped up by late 2019 and we resumed normal parish life in our beautifully renovated facilities. While various details and appointments still needed to be tended to, as 2020 arrived, parish life had largely gotten back to normal, with the addition of the enhancements the renovation made possible. So for example, our two adult education programs of 2019-20 were video based, as we were now equipped to utilize the new Fellowship Hall A/V system.

As Dean of this Cathedral, my broad concern at the beginning of this year was two-fold, reflecting the double effect of the remodel project. On the one hand, I did not want the disruptions to typical parish life to cause a long-term short-circuit in our parish rhythm; on the other, I didn't want to lose the energy and momentum that the project had generated.



To that end, I took the initiative of having the Parish Council establish a Strategic Planning committee. This committee was tasked with identifying the strategic priorities for our community for the next five years, and a plan to implement them.

The first step the committee decided upon was the All-parish survey.

We wanted to get a sense of what our parish membership was thinking and feeling. As you know, the survey generated a very good response, was completed, and we had begun to report its findings back to you all.

In the meantime, church attendance had continued to be very strong during first couple of months of the year. On the Sunday of Orthodoxy, March 8, we had the largest group of children ever participate in the procession of the icons.

Then the coronavirus hit. On the Second Sunday of Lent, attendance was down by 50%. By the Third Sunday, the Veneration of the Cross, we were doing the service without a congregation. And so it has been since. Parish life has been shuttered to a far greater degree than the construction ever caused. All momentum has ground to a halt. The only question at hand is, "When will be able to serve Liturgy again with a congregation attending?"

Thus the mission of the Strategic Planning committee had to be significantly revised. Originally we were looking at growing, enhancing, and rendering more effective the programs and ministries of our parish. At this moment in time, we are looking at how to best rebuild parish life from the ground up.

We will continue to report on the All-parish survey results as they become germane to our parish situation. But at this point, we have to begin to envision what our parish will look like post-COVID-19. That is the great unknown we are beginning to contemplate at this moment in time.



MEMORY ETERNAL

Esther Gemas, 4/5

Jane Taylor, 4/12
mother of Britt Messner

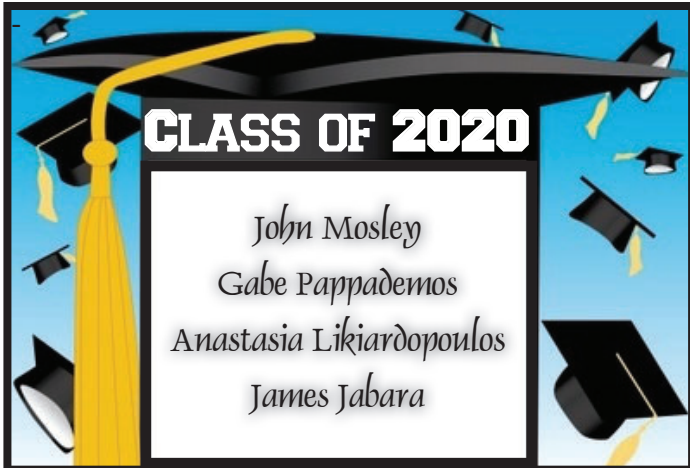
Barry Cantu, 4/23

MANY YEARS!

MABROOK! BLESSINGS!

BIRTH

Brigid Carolyn Vaughan, 4/12
daughter of Joshua and Tawny



Happy Mother's Day

Sunday May 10th



When offering Holy Bread



The limit for the total amount of names is
24 for the living and 24 for the dead.

Offerings mean:

- 3 families – 8 names each
- 2 families – 12 names each
- 1 family – 24 names

Please prioritize the list of names by the following:

- Immediate family members
- Godchildren
- Those in special need of God's mercy
- Orthodox Christians

Thank you for your consideration.



ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN GRANTS

are available to the women of our Archdiocese who wish to continue their education in order to improve their circumstances and those of their families.

The qualifications for the grant are as follows.

- Be a female, 26 years of age or older
- Be a member in Good Standing of their Antiochian parish
- Be actively involved in the worship, service, and social life of her parish
- Be applying for, or registered in, an academic or trade study program
- Demonstrate financial need

All applications must be received by June 1, 2020

https://antiochianprodsa.blob.core.windows.net/web-siteattachments/AW--MARCH_MAILING_2020--ScholarshipCoordinator--Grant_Application.pdf

MAY FASTING



There is no fasting the first week of May as this is Bright Week. After that for the remainder of the month the normal fasting traditions are observed: abstain from meat, poultry and dairy products on Wednesdays and Fridays.

Community Corner

Community Support

by Traci Spencer

we'd love to have you join us!

"for I was hungry and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me" — Matthew 25: 35-36

Completed Projects

COOK UP A STORM

On Saturday, February 8th, St. George volunteers made casseroles and cookies to serve to the homeless at The Warming Soul's Center on March 3rd.



LORD'S DINER

On Sunday, February 16th, St. George volunteers served the homeless at both locations in our community.

COMMUNITY AWARENESS FAIR

Our 4th Community Awareness Fair was a success on Sunday, March 1st, following Liturgy. Thank you for inquiring about the agencies that St. George is serving in 2020. Rachel Garton was the winner of the Bradley Fair gift card. Congratulations, Rachel!!



- Next Meeting -

Our next meeting will be when the stay at home order is lifted and we can attend church in person together again. The next meeting will be announced in the bulletin.

WARMING SOULS CENTER

Tuesday, March 3rd, St. George volunteers served casseroles, cookies, salad, and Texas Toast to homeless in our community at The Warming Soul's Center.



FAITH BUILDERS

Tuesday, April 21st, St. George Community Support gave \$1,000 to Faithbuilders as their food pantry was very low. They give food boxes weekly to families in need. Each box contains 3 lbs hamburger, spaghetti sauce and noodles, manwich, hamburger helper or taco seasoning and shells, tuna, tuna helper, macaroni, cans of vegetables, hot dogs, peanut butter, jelly, cereal, milk, bread/buns, pudding, diapers, wipes and formula. In addition, St. George offered snacks that had been purchased for Sunday School (which would have expired) to the children in these families. Andrea, at Faithbuilders, was so grateful for our help!



What's Coming Up ?

Due to the stay at home order, our ministry has mainly consisted of making phone calls and sending cards to isolated parishioners through our Care and Share Ministry. We look forward to resuming our service to the community and to our beloved Seniors. Praying for your health and safety. With Love, St. George Community Support Team.

Be Careful Always, & in Everything

Adapted by Fr. Paul from
orthochristian.com

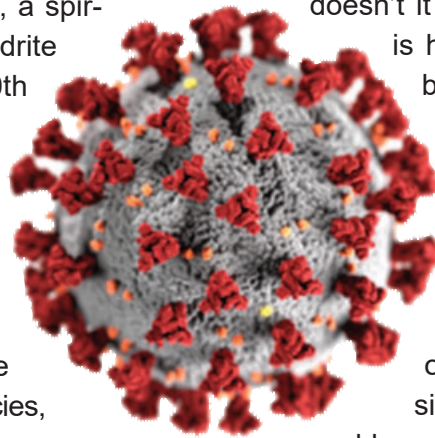
The following is an excerpt from a sermon that Metropolitan Tikhon (Shevkunov) of Pskov and Porkhov (Russian Orthodox Church), a spiritual son of the great elder, Archimandrite John (Krestiankin), gave on the 110th anniversary of Fr. John's birth, April 11, 2020.

Vladyka (i.e. Sayidna) Tikhon said, "Fr. John was a prophet. Many who knew him saw this in their own lives. Prophecies are not understood until they come to pass. That is the nature of prophecies, as we are taught by the holy fathers..."

"Well, in the year 2000, those who were close to Fr. John heard the following story. That night he had an extraordinary vision, a voice, a prophetic awakening, with specific words. And on the next day, that vision repeated itself with exactly the same words. When we heard this from Fr. John we couldn't understand it—the words were just too puzzling." This happened on December 4 and the next day, December 5.

Vladyka Tikhon read the words, which were written down by Fr. John:

"He saw something terrible, and heard a voice: 'Stand, and look at what I have allowed to happen, to bring you to reason: The unsudden death of people. Do not look for who is to blame. Do not look for who is to blame. Pray! Be careful always, and in everything.'



"Of course we cannot say completely for sure that yes, this is about what we are experiencing today. But doesn't it remind you of the terrible temptation that is happening throughout the world? Death is being allowed to visit so many people, but not sudden death, so that they would have time to assess their lives, to remember what good or evil they have done, and repent of the evil... Now something terrible is happening, and the whole world can see it. Many are saying that it is for our sins. But in the vision it was emphasized, said twice: 'Do not look for who is to blame.' People say it is for our coldness, for the breakup of the family, for unnatural sins of the flesh... Yes, that's probably right. But Fr. John was talking about something else. 'Do not look for who is to blame' means that we are to blame, all without exception. This includes church people, because judgment begins with the Church, the House of God. If we try to look for who is to blame outside the Church, then we will get completely mixed up. It will be perfectly correct if we seek the guilt only in ourselves for what has been allowed to happen."

This, dear readers, should mitigate fruitless discussion among Orthodox Christians on whether the virus came from a bat or a cat or an evil genius. Whatever or whoever is behind this was allowed by God, for our repentance. And we can leave all discussion of herd immunity vs. social distancing and self-isolation to the medical professionals. Our job is to pray, and be careful always, and in everything.



Pascha is the inextinguishable hope that Christ kindles in the hearts of His people, a hope that we who have been united with Him in His Church will finally share His triumph over death. *Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life.*

It is not as if Christians have never before been forced to cope with liturgical deprivation through extraordinary circumstances. I remember the story of some Orthodox Christians imprisoned for their faith and political dissent after 1949 in Romania. In one such prison in Jilava, the prisoners lived fifteen meters underground in dampness and darkness, the single window there sealed against light and fresh air. They were hungry, hemmed in, living in semi-darkness during the day and pitch blackness during the night, forty-five Orthodox men in the stench of mold, urine and excrement waiting in a tomb.

Inextinguishable Pascha!

By Fr. Lawrence Farley

(adapted from Orthochristian.com)

As Pascha approached, they were determined to keep Pascha. They calculated when the midnight hour would arrive because they remembered that the nearby train blew its whistle at 11.40 p.m. as it left the station. When midnight finally arrived, they all raised the cry, "Christ is risen!", and led by the two deacons among them, sang Paschal Matins from memory at the top of their lungs. Outside their cell, the guards went crazy, running up and down and banging on the doors, yelling at them to be quiet. But nothing could quench their joy and stop their mouths, and all the Jilava prison rang with the hymns of the Resurrection. Circumstances prevented the prisoners from serving the Paschal Eucharist and feasting as they had done in happier days. But no circumstances could separate them from Christ and from their Paschal hope.

That hope remains in our hearts as well, even as Christ's presence remains with us, whether or not we can gather together physically on Pascha night to serve the Eucharist and keep the Paschal feast. Christ remains in our midst, and we have still Him, because we still have each other. For now, we must meet together separately, and share the Paschal celebration virtually through our computer screens at home. Soon enough we will join together and clasp hands physically as well. For now, from our homes on Pascha night let us rejoice in our risen Lord. We Orthodox Whos, the tall and the small, will sing to the Lord this Pascha. Pascha is within our grasp, so long as we have hands to clasp. Covid 19 cannot grinchily steal Pascha from us. It will come without us gathering for the Eucharist; it will come without the midnight feast. Somehow or other, it will come just the same.

The Cathedral Messenger

St. George Orthodox Christian Cathedral

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