

**Archpastoral Letter of His Beatitude
Metropolitan Jonah
PASCHA 2012**



**To the Very Reverend and Reverend Clergy, Monastics, and Faithful of the
Orthodox Church in America:**

Dearly beloved in the Lord:

As we celebrate the Feast of Feasts, the Mystery of Pascha, the Resurrection of Our Lord, I greet you, my brothers and sisters, and join you in hymns of praise to Him who has overcome the devil and loosed the bonds of death, to Him, our crucified and risen Savior, who has opened for us the gates of paradise and the promise of eternal life in Him.

The time of preparation for the heavenly Pascha has provided us the opportunity to concentrate on the status and reality of our lives. The examples of the Publican and the Pharisee, Zacchaeus, St John Climacus, Mary of Egypt, and St Gregory Palamas are all given to us by the Church to show us the path towards a life in Christ. The reading of the Passion Gospels, the veneration of our entombed Lord, and the proclamation of that empty tomb are not merely commemorations or remembrances. Rather, they are revelations of true life, which is life in Christ. Our path through Great Lent to our Lord's tomb, and the proclamation of his glorious resurrection constitute an authentic reality, which is life-giving, which connects us with the eternal reality of the Kingdom of God.

In his epistle to the Romans, the holy Apostle Paul states:

“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His Death? We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.” (Romans 6:4)

Through Holy Baptism and the mystery of our liturgical worship we behold the Holy Passion and Resurrection of Christ and witness to them. By them our spiritual eyes are enlightened, and we enter into these Mysteries as our own spiritual experience, our deepest experience of reality. And as Orthodox Christians we give thanks for the precious gift of God's love. We rejoice in the truth that all creation is renewed and we sing with the angels in heaven: “Shine, shine, O New Jerusalem; The glory of the Lord has shone on you!” It is for us to take up this glory, this radiance and apply it, truly discovering for ourselves the true reality and meaning of Pascha.

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The world presents to us an idea of “reality”. But this so-called “reality” is not the reality that we may experience as Orthodox Christians. Our “Real World” is Life in Christ, as St Gregory the Theologian writes:

*Yesterday I was crucified with Christ; today I
will be glorified with him.
Yesterday I died with Christ; today I will
return to life with Him.
Yesterday I was buried with Christ; today
I will rise with Him from the tomb.*

The Resurrection of Our Lord is given to us as the precious Feast of Feasts. Indeed, it is a time to manifest the light of the Resurrection from within our communities. It is also a time to keep the holiness of the Feast that the glory of the Lord may remain precious to us and we remain rooted in that ultimate connection with the eternal reality, the new life shining from the empty tomb.

Let us put to good use the illumination given to us by the Risen Lord, that we may identify our gifts, our talents, our treasures, that we may offer them back to Him who has ascended the Cross for our salvation, to Him in whom we find the only genuine reality, and to Him, who, through the Cross, offers to us the promise of salvation and eternal life in His Kingdom.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ! May you always abide in true reality – the light of Christ, His peace, love and joy.

Christ is risen! Indeed, He is risen!

With love in our Risen Lord,



†JONAH
Archbishop of Washington
Metropolitan of All America and Canada