

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, 2019

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

*"He Who seals the abyss, and opens it again, Who takes up water into the clouds, and makes it rain, You are He, O Lord, Who made the root blossom from the fruitless Anna the holy one, bringing forth as spotless fruit the rod that is the Theotokos."* - Canon of Nativity of the Theotokos

Saint Andrew of Crete calls the Nativity of the Theotokos "the beginning of feasts" because it ushers in a new era-the era of our salvation. Saint Andrew notes,

*The present day solemnity is a line of demarcation, separating the truth from its prefigurative symbol, and ushering in the new in place of the old. Paul - that Divine Trumpeter of the Spirit - exclaims thus about this: "For anyone that be in Christ, ye are remade a new creature; the old passeth away and behold all is become new" (2 Cor 5:17); "for the law hath perfected nothing adducing for a better hope, whereby we draw nigh to God" (Heb 7:19). The truth of grace hath shown forth brightly." (Homily on the Nativity of the Theotokos)*

Saint Silouan the Athonite writes,

*A remarkable and incomprehensible thing. [The Theotokos] lives in the Heavens and ceaselessly beholds the Glory of God, but she does not neglect us poor ones, and she embraces with her compassion the whole earth and all the faithful. This Spotless Mother of His the Lord gave to us. She is our joy and our hope!"*

The birth of the Mother of God is our source of great joy and hope! The Most Holy Mother of God prays for us ceaselessly. She is always visiting us. Whenever we turn to her in our heart, she is there. After the Lord, she is the greatest protection for mankind. She is ready and willing to help us at every moment, if we turn to her in childlike humility.

May the Most holy Theotokos save us and protect us from all dangers now and in the future.

Yours in Christ,

Handwritten signature of 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)*

4407 Kanawha Ave. SE, Charleston, WV 25304-1734  
(724) 787-9832 Phone Bpthomasjoseph@gmail.com