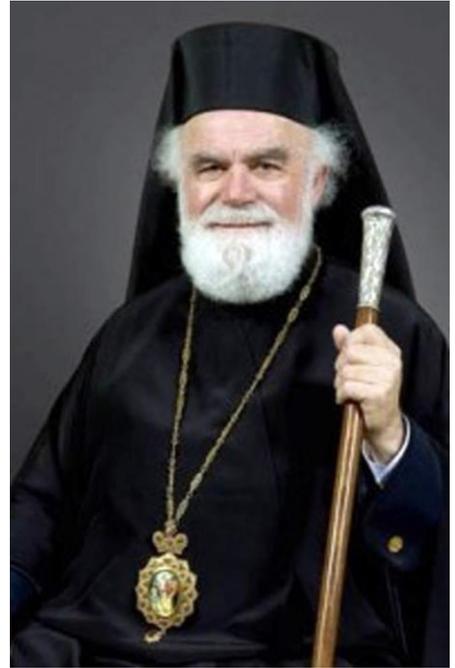


My Beloved Ones,

I greet you with that most beautiful and joyous of greetings,
ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΝΕΣΤΗ! Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!

Having celebrated the highest feast of our liturgical year, I pray that we were all able to experience the brightness that the feast of Pascha brings to all our lives. The Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ plays the most important role in our relationship with our God, three undivided persons in one Holy Trinity. This personal relationship between man and God is explained further in the Gospel for the week after Pascha, Thomas Sunday.

The Gospel also clearly demonstrates the differences between understanding and belief. After His Resurrection, the Lord appeared to His Disciples, even from behind the door they themselves locked out of fear. Now, Thomas was not there to witness this blessed event, and so he remained skeptical, saying, *“Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe”* (John 20:25) Eight days later, the Lord appeared to His Disciples, fulfilling Thomas’ request. Thomas, amazed, became the first therefore to proclaim our Lord’s human and divine nature when He exclaimed, *“My Lord and my God!”* (John 20:28)



Those things that we understand are events and actions that we are able to witness and then analyze with our minds. In Christ’s dialogue with the Apostle Thomas, we witness first, the historical reality of our Lord’s bodily Resurrection from the Dead, the proof of this phenomenon. Even so, our Lord uses Thomas’ need for proofs as an important distinction, saying, *“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe”* (John 20:29).

I would ask that we take this simple, powerful lesson and extend it further: as today’s disciples, it is as important to *live* out a relationship with Jesus Christ, than it is to only believe in Him. As St. Paul says, *“...Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures... he was buried... he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures... Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive”* (1 Corinthians 15:3-5; 20-22).

Therefore, as we continue to honor our Lord’s Resurrection, we must never forget that it is through this miraculous event that we have been given the promise of our eternal life, when our immortal soul shall be separated from its earthly body. As Orthodox Christians, may we continue to strengthen our relationship with our Lord, professing our belief in Him, and His Life-Giving Resurrection.

+ALEXIOS
Metropolitan of Atlanta