



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF CHICAGO

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΣΙΚΑΓΟΥ

NATHANAEL

By the mercy of God, Metropolitan of the Holy Metropolis of Chicago

To the Reverend Clergy, Monastic Communities, and blessed faithful of the
Holy Metropolis of Chicago.

Beloved fathers and brethren,
My beloved children in the Lord of the Metropolis of Chicago,

The crucifixion, death and burial of Jesus Christ caused an overwhelming existential crisis in those closest to the Lord. Although Jesus had spoken to His disciples on numerous occasions about the fate of the Son of Man, they lost all composure at the sight of the Master crucified. The prophecy of Zacharias was fulfilled: when the Shepherd was struck down, the sheep scattered and fled in fear (Zech. 13: 7; Matt 26:31). Jesus' miracles and prophetic words were not enough to keep the disciples from falling away to cower in hiding. They were still spiritually immature despite having been so close to the Lord. Like infants apart from their mothers, like toddlers outside of their routines, the disciples were inconsolable without Christ. They could not conceive of life without Jesus visibly by their side; their faith in Him rested in the familiar comfort of His physical presence.

Much like the disciples, Mary Magdalene, one of the Myrrh-bearing women, yearned for the presence of the Lord; unlike them, however, she initially responded to the crucifixion with courage, not cowardice. Mary refused to remain hidden in some upper room. At daybreak on the third day, she courageously left the safety and comfort of her home and ventured to the Lord's sepulcher to complete the traditional rites of burial. Upon her arrival, she found something she never expected, something she had not prepared for—an empty tomb. Unsettled by the vacantness of the tomb, Mary panicked. For she also longed to see

and touch Jesus, to handle and care for His lifeless body. Like the disciples, Mary's faith hinged on that which was familiar rather than on that which was essential.

Beloved sisters and brothers in the Risen Christ,

The Resurrection of Christ changes everything! The disciples, once a group of cowering men, were transformed into fearless evangelists and apostles. Mary Magdalene, once lost in the void of the empty tomb, became the first herald of Christ's victory over death! The Resurrection of Jesus Christ continues to transform the world. Like the disciples and Mary Magdalene, we are also made whole and brought to maturity of faith and life. Our hearts and minds are raised to new heights of love and understanding. Our priorities are transformed through the Resurrection. We transcend old routines and habits and enter into the essence and inner meaning of the familiar rituals of the Faith.

Though the present crisis has taken us away from the sanctuaries and the services that we so dearly love, it cannot rob us of the true joy of the Resurrection—the knowledge that God's love is stronger than death, and that Christ shares His victory with us all. During these difficult and trying times, I pray that the Light of Pascha will rekindle our faith in Christ. In so doing, may we, as a Metropolis family, concern ourselves with weightier matters of the new life in Him, namely: mercy, faith and love.

Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!