



**GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA
ARCHEPISCOPAL ENCYCLICAL**

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Archiepiscopal Encyclical on Great and Holy Pascha, 2025

Holy Pascha, 2025

Unto the Most Reverend and Right Reverend Hierarchs, Pious Priests and Deacons, the Monks and Nuns, Presidents and Members of Parish Councils, Honorable Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Members of Leadership 100, the Day and Afternoon Schools, Philoptochos Societies, the Youth, Greek Orthodox Organizations, and the entirety of the Christ-named Plenitude of the Holy Archdiocese of America:

*You raised with Yourself the whole race of Adam,
when You arose from the tomb.
(Canon of Pascha, Ode 6)*

Χριστὸς Ἀνέστη! Christ is Risen!

When our Lord Jesus Christ arose from the dead, not a single witness is recorded as having seen this most monumental event in the history of the human race. His crucifiers, who posted sentries to ensure that no one tampered with the seal that had been set upon the Stone that covered His tomb, only felt the earthquake and bore false witness against the truth of His Resurrection (Matthew 27:62-66). But the Lord had no need to break that seal or roll away any stone, for His Arising from the grave transcended all categories of human understanding. Rather, the earthquake and the stone's rolling away by the angel happened for the astonished guards, the myrrhbearers and His perplexed disciples.

The Church, in Her divinely inspired wisdom, has given us a picture of this moment with the icon that is simply named, "Anastasis." The most famous version of this icon in the world, which has inspired countless reproductions, is in the *Parecclesion* of the Chora Church in

Constantinople. Notably, it depicts the resplendent and risen Lord of Glory lifting Adam and Even out of their tombs by their wrists, and not their hands. This dramatic detail of humankind's rescue from death and Hades manifests that, as the Apostle Paul says, "by grace we are saved" (Ephesians 2:8). It is not by our efforts that Eternal Life is won for us. It is the Sacrifice of the Cross and its only possible conclusion – the Resurrection – that usher us into the Mansions of Heaven. God holds onto us with His fierce and glorious love! He will not let us go, and He does not depend on our strength to hold onto Him. For again, as the Apostle says, even "the weakness of God is mightier than any human power" (I Corinthians 1:25).

My dear Christians,

If this is how God loves us, how should we love one another? In this season of Pascha, when we sing: "let us forgive everything in the Resurrection" (*Doxastikon* of the Matins), what possible negativity could we hold on to? Rather, let us take hold of one another and lift up each other through love, compassion, forgiveness and mercy. For God lifted us up first, so that we might share the exaltation of love with everyone around us. Because only then can we sing with true integrity and unfettered joy the gladsome Paschal anthem:

*Christ is risen from the dead, by death trampling down upon death,
and to those in the tombs He has granted life!*

Χριστὸς Ἀνέστη! Christ is Risen!

Holy Pascha 2025,



† ELPIDOPHOROS
Archbishop of America