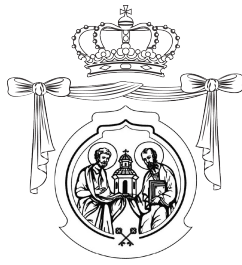


His Eminence
The Most Reverend
Metropolitan SABA

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

Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos & Ecclesiastical New Year - 2023

Beloved in Christ,

As we approach the end of the ecclesiastical year, we once again are blessed to celebrate the Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary. Often the end of something is considered a loss and comes with sadness, however, the repose of the Mother of God was the occasion for her blessed reception into the Kingdom of her Son and our God. St. Theophan the Recluse relays to us that when she received the news from the Archangel Gabriel that her repose was drawing near, “the Most Pure One was overjoyed to hear such news, and began to prepare.

By the day of her repose, by the command of God, there appeared miraculously in Jerusalem, except for the Apostle Thomas, all the apostles who had been scattered for preaching throughout the world. They were witnesses of Her peaceful, quiet, holy and blessed death. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself, in heavenly glory, surrounded by an innumerable multitude of angels and righteous spirits, appeared to receive the soul of His Most Pure Mother and with glory ascended her to heaven. This is how the Most Holy Virgin Mary ended her earthly life!”

What a blessed ending of her earthly life and glorious beginning of her heavenly life. This transition from life to life, even through the letting go of death, provides us with a beautiful example of how we also should face the changes in life and most especially the passage of death in a way that brings peace. For as St. Paul writes, “For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.” (Romans 8:6)

Let us, then, begin the Ecclesiastical New Year with firm resolve to lay aside the old life that is behind and to press on toward newness of life in Christ. Let us recommit ourselves to an active participation in the liturgical life of the Church, serving one another in love, and caring for the poor and those in need. May we, like the Theotokos, live in such a way that the news of our own passing from life to life is met with joy and thanksgiving to the Lord of heaven and earth.

May God grant us all a blessed Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos and a spiritually fruitful new Ecclesiastical Year!

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "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