



# GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF CHICAGO

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## ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΣΙΚΑΓΟΥ

To the Sacred Clergy, the Monastic Brotherhoods and Sisterhoods, and the blessed laity of the Sacred Metropolis of Chicago.

Beloved fathers and brethren, Beloved children in the Lord,

Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!

Having reached the final steps of our Lenten Journey to Pascha, we gather on this most blessed day of the Lord's Resurrection from the dead to receive God's universal invitation: *Come, receive the Light!* Overwhelmed by the weight of sin and guilt, we receive with great relief our Lord's message: *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest* (Matt. 11:28).

God's invitation to approach Him is a radical break from the past. In the past, our ancestors hid from God (Gen. 3:10; Ex. 3:6) or were afraid to converse with him (Ex. 20:19); today, we stand upright, gazing directly into the eyes of the Risen Lord. In the past, sacrifices and offerings were offered on altars for the forgiveness of sin; today, the Son of God has offered Himself as ransom (1 Tim 2:6) and sacrifice (Rom. 3:25) for all people. In the past, angels and prophets conveyed God's will to the world; today, the Kingdom of God is within each of us (Luke 17:21)!

Like a caring parent, eager to help a child learn to walk, God stands across from us, stretches forth His arms, and encourages us: ***Come!*** And as sons and daughters, we are moved by the sight of His tender smile and we courageously take our first steps back into His loving embrace.

Beloved friends, the Paschal invitation, *Come, receive the Light*, is nothing less than a divine call to receive and to share God's unconditional love—to enter into a personal and life-changing relationship with Jesus Christ and with each other. As we encounter poverty, injustice, and other forms of suffering in our daily lives, may we respond with love by showing charity, compassion, and by defending the rights of the poor and needy (Proverbs 31:9). As our relationships with our siblings, spouses, and friends are tested, may we respond with love by forgiving those who have wronged us and by showing humility before those we have offended. In so doing, we remain in God's embrace and also become living expressions of the Light of Christ in the world so that others may join us.

Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!

With paternal blessings and love in the Risen Lord,

† Metropolitan Nathanael of Chicago