

To The Clergy,
the Esteemed Parish Council Presidents &
members
the Esteemed Philoptochos Presidents & members,
And all the faithful of the Metropolis of Atlanta:

My beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord,

I greet you all with love and joy in the name of our Risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Having been found worthy to once again approach our Lord's life-giving Resurrection, I pray that you and your families are healthy and safe during this holy season.

Indeed, preparing to celebrate the Feast of Feasts during a pandemic has refocused our attention in many ways. Of course, we mourn that many of our churches are unable to gather to "...receive the *unwaning light...*" in person.

However, consider, my dear children, the minds and hearts of our Lord's first Disciples: they witnessed His miraculous ministry and His triumphant entry into Jerusalem; they were blessed to receive the first-ever Eucharist—and yet, when His time came in the Garden, almost all of the Twelve abandoned their teacher. Though Christ had told them many times of His Passion and Resurrection, the only Disciples who witnessed the angels at the tomb were the Myrrh bearers. On the first Pascha, the others were, as the Gospel of John tells us, "*...together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders...*" (John 20:19)

How fortunate we are then, to experience such a similar kind of Pascha, but with an important difference. We are blessed, because—unlike those Disciples, so full of fear—we remain in our homes, certain of the greatest day in human history. We are blessed, because, as our Lord says, we "*...are those who have not seen and yet have believed.*" (John 20:29) During this time of increased watchfulness for both soul and body, the truth of our Lord's victory over Death has become even more central to our reality as Orthodox Christians. We know that we need not be afraid, for as St. John Chrysostom writes in His Paschal Homily, "*Christ is risen, and life reigns! Christ is risen, and not one dead remains in a tomb!*"

Even during a serious time such as this, may you greet the coming Resurrection of our Lord with joy and gladness, and may the Paschal light shine forth brightly in your homes, and among all our parish families, now and forever!

Χριστὸς ἀνέστη! Ἀληθῶς ἀνέστη!
Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!

+ ALEXIOS
Metropolitan of Atlanta

