



METROPOLIS
OF DETROIT

HOLY MOTHER QUEEN OF ALL (*PANAGIA PANTOVASILISSA*) GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

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For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons,
neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth,
nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of

God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

[Romans 8: 38-39]

April 18, 2020
Great and Holy Saturday

Rev. Fr. William J. Redmon, to the stewards, Parish Council, Philoptochos chapter, FiftyUp Fellowship, Y'ALL Fellowship, GOYA youth, Committee members, Altar Guild, Choir singers, Ministry volunteers, Church School teachers and administrators, and all of those who labour, teach, and sing for the greater glory of God as members of the Holy Mother Queen of All/ *Panagia Pantovasilissa* parish family: Greetings in Christ Jesus, our Risen Lord!

Christ is Risen!

Never in any of our lives have we endured a Holy Week as strange as this one has been. Even during the Second World War, some, if not all of us, were able to gather and experience the majesty of our liturgical tradition together in the Church. This year, my friends, that has not been the case. This year, out of an abundance of compassion and concern for the safety and health of others, we were forced to physically separate ourselves. This year, we were prevented from being present *in* the present, so that we can *all* be present with one another in the future. For the depth of the love which we borrow from Christ and bear towards one another would not brook the absence of even a single soul from our midst at that first Liturgy when we inevitably come back together again, were it a result of our own actions or lack thereof. And we bask in this love, for it is our sure and certain spiritual reality.

Physically, however, many things about this week have been different. As the Bridegroom of the Church entered the temple, the people were not present to greet him. As the Last Supper was made present on the altar, the people were not present to partake of the gifts with the Apostles. As we commemorated the mournful day of the Crucifixion, the people were not able to stand at the foot of the Cross to be washed with His blood. At the service of the Hours, where the Emperor once stood present, the people were absent. At the Descent from the Cross, where Joseph of Arimathea wrapped the Lord in a clean linen shroud, there were none standing by to bear his Body into the sanctuary. And, perhaps most mournfully, as we sang the Lamentations, though voices were raised throughout the city, we could not hear one another and feel our shared grief over the Life of the World laid in the Tomb. And, as your priest, I can tell you that I have never been a part of such a sorrowful and solitary procession as that which I made around the Epitaphios enshrined in the Tomb, as we asked our Lord for His grace amidst the trials of the world.

Yet at the end of the Fast, at the end of Great and Holy Week, we still find, waiting for us, the Empty Tomb. It is a great paradox which strikes us, as we find our fulfillment in the emptiness contained therein. For though we have endured a Great Lent, and a Holy Week, like none which we have ever seen, we have been guided here, to the end of our journey, by the familiar sight of the Light of the Resurrection. And bathed in the warmth and the radiance of this Light, we find that the rest of our lives are illumined, and the flame of our faith is rekindled, in the midst of the turmoil and tribulation of the world around us.

Though in this moment we behold that light from afar—though in this moment we are forced to be physically apart—we can *never* be truly separated from one another. For, my friends, in the Lord we are not merely united; we are made one. And we are not merely made one with one another, but with the entirety of the Church throughout human history. For, in Christ, we are grafted into a communion in which live all of those who have called on the name of Christ down through the ages. And being made one with those so separate from us in time, and with the angels in heaven so separate from us in being, we are able to laugh at the mere earthly miles which some would claim now separate us.

In the Lord, my brothers and sisters, we are in constant communion with one another. This is a communion in which there is always joy, for we bear in ourselves the joy of the saints. This is a communion in which there can be no malice, for the bonds of love which tie us together are the very love of Christ. This is a communion in which there can be no death, for Christ has triumphed over the grave. And, my friends, this is a communion in which there can be no separation, for though the world of shadows in which we sojourn might have us believe otherwise, we are all united in Christ's victory over the bonds of Death. Let us rejoice in that ultimate victory, my beloved flock, for Christ is Risen!

Wishing you and yours a blessed Pascha, and longingly looking towards the time when we might gather again before the Lord's Table, I remain,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Fr. William J. Redmon". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross symbol at the beginning.

Rev. Fr. William J. Redmon

Presiding Priest

Holy Mother Queen of All Greek Orthodox Church