

His Eminence  
The Most Reverend  
Metropolitan JOSEPH



Archbishop of New York and  
Metropolitan of  
All North America

**ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE**  
OF NORTH AMERICA

May 12, 2021

Beloved Faithful in Christ,

Greetings and blessings to you and your families in the Name of our Risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! Christ is risen! Indeed, He is risen!

I pray that you had a blessed feast of Holy Pascha. We remember the difficulties imposed on us this time last year due to the pandemic, and it was a joy to travel and commemorate the week of the Life-giving and Saving Passion of our Savior and His Glorious Third-day Resurrection with so many of faithful.

When I ascended the archiepiscopal throne of this God-protected Archdiocese, I promised to make our youth and young adults a focus of my ministry. When I think of the struggles, privations, and civil strife of the last year, my heart goes out first and foremost to our young people. During these trying times, they were cut off from grandparents and family members, school and sports, important life events and social activities. Most importantly, many have lost touch with the Church. When the churches opened again to the faithful, I have been disappointed to see that in many cases the families with children have been the last to return.

Upon my request, the Assembly of Canonical Bishops agreed to declare this year of 2021 as the Year of Youth. We need to take this time as pastors, parents, parish council members, teachers, advisors, and the youth to return to the Father's House and commit ourselves and each other to Christ.

I have asked Fr. Nicholas Belcher to lead our efforts to revitalize our youth and young adult ministries. He will be reaching out to all our dioceses, clergy, parents, teachers, lay leaders, and young people to assess the needs of our young people – to ask what are we doing well and what can we do better? He will be joined by a task force of lay and clergy leaders who are experienced in the areas of Christian education, youth ministry, young adult ministry, and camping.

I would like to take this opportunity to offer my deepest thanks and appreciation to those who have worked so hard over the years on behalf of our young people. Particularly, we thank these individuals for their years of leadership and dedicated

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service: Fr. Joseph Purpura of the Department of Youth and Parish Ministry, Carole Buleza of the Department of Christian Education, and Fr. Anthony Yazge of the Department of Camping as well as the Young Adult Ministry. May our Lord bless them for their excellent stewardship of these ministries over the years!

As we begin this time of reflection and planning for the future, Fr. Nicholas will serve as a point person for the Young Adult Ministry, Anna Sarah Farha for the Department of Christian Education, Fr. Philip Rogers and Erin Ghata for the Department of Youth, and Khalil Samara for the Department of Camping to make sure we are continuing the important work of these ministries.

Nothing could be more important to my ministry as the Metropolitan Archbishop of this Archdiocese than our youth. I ask that we all engage in this process with open minds and hearts and prayer. We will be updating all of the Parish Life Conferences this summer about this important work, and we will have a strategic plan to present to the Archdiocese Convention.

With prayerful best wishes for a blessed and grace-filled celebration of this Pentecostarion period, I remain,

Your Father in the Risen Lord,



**+JOSEPH**

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