



**The Self-Ruled Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese
OF NORTH AMERICA**

The Diocese of Charleston, Oakland and the Mid-Atlantic

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July 26, 2010

Feast of St. Paraskevi

Your Grace, Bishop BASIL, Fr. James, Kh. Lynn, beloved of the MacKay family, and
brothers and sisters in Christ of the Church of St. Joseph,

Greetings in the Name of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ.

*O death, where is thy sting? O Hades, where is thy victory?
Christ is risen, and you are overthrown!
Christ is risen, and the demons are fallen!
Christ is risen, and the angels rejoice!
Christ is risen, and life reigns!
Christ is risen, and not one dead remains in a tomb!*

– Paschal Homily of St. John Chrysostom

It was with great shock and with sadness that I heard of the passing of Fr. Matthew. Fr. Matthew and I have been good friends since he was assigned to St. Joseph's. For a good period of time, he heard my confession. He shared the altar with me at St. Joseph's for many Fridays during Great Lent as we celebrated the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts. We renewed this practice during this past Great Lenten period when I visited Houston and once again celebrated the Presanctified Liturgy with him on Friday morning.

Fr. Matthew was a priest who loved the holy Orthodox Church with his whole body and his whole soul. He celebrated the divine services diligently and with great joy. He loved God, and he loved the parishioners God gave him to minister to. I can remember many times when we visited together he talked about the concern that he had for the salvation of the parishioners of St. Joseph.

He was a man of great courage. He was not afraid to speak the truth, even if it meant that he would personally suffer because of it. The most important thing to him was that he did what God wanted him to do. In my humble opinion, he ministered faithfully and diligently, always seeking to do God's will.

I will miss him greatly. He was usually one of the first calls I made when I came into Houston. Seeing him and speaking to him was always one of the highlights of my visits. I know that he will be greatly missed at St. Joseph's. He was the only pastor St. Joseph's has ever had. Please know that you are in my prayers.

This evening, I went and prayed for him very close to the grave of St. Raphael and asked intercession for his soul. Fr. Anthony Bahou remembered him this evening at Great Vespers here at the Antiochian Village. Fr. Anthony and I will be remembering him here with all the priests who are gathered with the counselors and campers in our daily services. We will be serving the Trisagion service here in his memory.

May God give you the strength to bear his departure from this life. May his memory be eternal.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bishop Thomas". The signature is written in black ink and is preceded by a small cross symbol.

Rt. Rev. Bishop THOMAS
Bishop of Charleston/Oakland and Assistant to The Metropolitan