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Archbishop of Albania shared a message of resilience and courage



His Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana, Durrës, and All Albania shared a global message for the World Council of Churches (WCC) fellowship between the Orthodox Easter and Pentecost.

In today's world, the message notes: "The invoking of Christ's name has no place in plans of political expediency and oppression of individuals and peoples."

Archbishop Anastasios, an honorary member of the Academy of Athens and a former WCC president, with more than six decades in the ecumenical movement, is known as a herald of peace and wisdom in inter-religious and international circles.

+ ANASTASIOS (YANNOULATOS)
Archbishop of Tirana, Durres, and All Albania (1992-)*
"The Authority of the Risen Christ"

Amidst the fatigue, confusion, and concern about what is painfully happening on our planet, in the weakness that often makes us feel exhausted by numerous personal difficulties, Easter comes to illuminate abundantly and offer something unique: the power of the Resurrection, the triumph of the power of the God of love.

The God-man Jesus, slandered by the religious status quo, unjustly condemned by the authorities, reviled by crowds, not only rises from the dead victorious but also receives absolute authority from God the Father: the Resurrected Lord assures His disciples that “all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Matthew 28:18) and assigns them to preach this message of universal significance to all peoples.

God’s unimaginable power was jubilantly revealed in the Resurrection. Jesus voluntarily accepted the humiliation of the Passion and crushed the dynasty of demonic power, a power based on arrogance and selfishness: He fixed our sins on the cross “and by death trampling down death” He has granted us life – “eternal life.” God the Father placed His crucified and risen Son “far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come and He has put all things under His feet” (Ephesians 1:21-22). It is this redemptive change that we celebrate during Easter.

Almighty God placed Jesus Christ as “the head over all things for the church” (Ephesians 1:22). And the Church, as the eucharistic community of the Resurrection, preaches the mystery of Triune God, the salvation of human beings in Christ through the Holy Spirit, and proclaims the final transcendence of death and our participation in the life of the Risen One. As the secret “body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all” (Ephesians 1:23), the Church radiates the glory of the living Lord to all creation. He lives through time with a strong eschatological hope that every other force will submit at the end of time to His own unique authority of love.

But the authority of Jesus over mankind is quite different from worldly powers. At the crucial moment of the Passion before Pilate, Jesus emphasised that “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36). At the same time, He reminded us that He can impose His authority at any time (Matthew 26:53). He validated a clear distinction between the spiritual and the worldly. An order that will last until His glorious return.

In contrast to the various theocratic traditions that link religious and state power, the Church must remain consistent in her spiritual role. The invoking of Christ’s name has no place in plans of political expediency and oppression of individuals

and peoples. Jesus projected a different conception of authority into human society. He set the ministry to His fellow man as the basis and ideal, While the rulers of this world usually dominate, disregarding the dignity of the common people and oppressing the weak, Jesus lived as “one who serves” (Luke 22:25-27). He gave this example to His people, to His Church. By sending His disciples into the world, He transferred His authority onto them and entrusted them with His spiritual authority. He insisted that exercising it would constitute ministry, selfless giving.

The authority of the risen Christ is related to the voluntary Passion. The Lord remains the sympathizer in every person’s suffering. The Resurrection is not something that comes independently, as something that follows the Cross, but it exists in the Cross, in Passion. And our acceptance of the crucified and risen Christ leads to the experience of the Resurrection. We believe in the God of mercy, who bows lovingly over the human beings wounded by sin. He is not oppressive; He serves. He is not vengeful; He forgives. He does not trample; He redeems. He does not impose Himself with propaganda and fanfare; He acts in discreet silence. Above all, His authority is redemptive, as a gift of forgiveness and love. The resurrected Jesus respects the freedom and sanctity of every human person, including those who doubt Him. He does not cause fear; He frees human existence from fear, especially from the fear of death. Those who follow Him regard this authority as the most important authority, and it is this authority they ought to exercise.

Nowadays there is a sense that humanity is subject to various uncontrollable powers: political, military, economic, legal, ideological, which arbitrarily lead to confusion with tragic consequences. In the widespread frustration felt over how the powerful exercise power, the resurrection of Christ brings a breath of hope. It reminds us that, apart from the tragic and unfathomable events of today, the course of the world does not ultimately depend on accumulated power and knowledge and on their arrogant use by the powerful of the earth. The essential and final authority is in the hands of He who has fully respected the freedom of humankind, to the point of reproaching the religiously strict. His authority brings together the mystical power of justice, peace, love, and life. He continues to act redemptively in the history of humankind, even if many doubt Him in theory or in practice. And it is this power that will ultimately judge the world.

Our optimism is based on this certainty. This is not a vague theory; the almighty power of the Lord is often revealed in our daily lives. This truth gives us resilience and courage even during the most painful phases of our global and personal history. But it also gives us power and energy to intervene in historical events. His Church, as “His Body,” and each of her cells, her members, evangelizes and shares

the energy and living presence of the Godman in history. Her members wield this spiritual authority and must act in His power as an agent of justice, reconciliation, and peace-making. They must strive in historical, local, or global affairs, with an enlightened conscience, with clear spiritual criteria. His people are not entitled to follow patterns of oppression and authority. They believe in the power and spiritual authority of love and submit to it. That is the basis of their freedom.

The Lord, who has been given “all authority in heaven and on earth,” is not some distant entity, lost in the fog of the past. He is alive, present in our minds, hearts, and consciences, comforting, and inspiring. Awareness of the presence of the risen Lord, the victor over death and ruler of the universe, is the most essential element of the Christian experience. The certainty that He is constantly with us “every day of our lives” pacifies our existence, even in the storm of injustice and war, when “death sorrows” surround us and the torrents of lawlessness shake us.

Let the certainty that “all authority in heaven and on earth” has been bestowed upon Him, the Lord of love, resurrect our wounded optimism for the future of the world.

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