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His Eminence Archbishop Nikitas of Thyateira and Great Britain issues his Easter Message



Easter Message of His Eminence Archbishop Nikitas

“On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were”

Beloved in the Lord:

The above words, taken from the Gospel of John, describe the situation that first Easter morning. It seems that these same words describe the situations in the world, as we mark the great feast of Pascha. The doors of the Churches are closed but the hearts of the faithful are open and ready to receive the joyous message of the Resurrection.

These have been challenging days and times for all of us, as you all know, and some feel empty and lost. Some have allowed fear to enter their hearts and minds, as to be confused and tempted in a variety of ways. As Christians, though, we are called to be hopeful and optimistic even in the most difficult of times, and not to allow for fear and hopelessness to cause us to lose our way. We remember that the

disciples also fell into this temptation but more importantly we recall that Christ appeared to them to reassure them and to put out their fear. For Christ, Who is love, casts out fear (1 John, 4:18).

In our own days and situations, we recall the prophecy of the dry bones (Ezekiel, Chapter 37) and the promise of the Lord to breathe life into His people. The coronavirus left us empty, sad, and lifeless, like the dry bones. Now, the Resurrection of Christ comes to take away the emptiness, pain and sorrow and fill us with joy, hope and life. For Christ has been raised from the dead and he comes to open the gates of paradise to us and all future generations. The days of the fast are over and we are called to enter into the joy of the Lord and celebrate the unique event of the Anastasis. We have toiled and labored on the lenten journey and we have reached the safe harbor of Pascha. Our sacrifices and labors were not in vain. “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.” (1 Cor. 15:58)

In the darkness of the night a small, but unwaning flame comes to an empty world of darkness. It is the light of Christ and the message of hope, for he says to us – “fear not, for I am with you, be not dismayed, for I am your God.” (Isaiah 41:10). He comes, once again, at this critical moment in history to offer us joy instead of sadness, hope instead of despair, and truth instead of deception. Although we will be apart, the joy of the Resurrection unites us and gives the strength to say to others that we still believe! We have the same faith and courage as the women who stood at the foot of the Cross, the same as the Theotokos who waited by the tomb, the same as the Myrrh-bearing women. Of this courage and faith, St. Romanos the great poet and hymnographer, writes:

“To the Sun who was before the sun and yet had set in a tomb, myrrh-bearing maidens hastened towards dawn, seeking him as the day, and they cried to one another: “Friends, come, let us anoint with spices the life-bearing yet buried body, the flesh which raises fallen Adam and now lies in a grave. Come, let us hurry, like the magi let us adore and let us offer sweet spices as gifts to the One who is now wrapped, not in swaddling clothes, but in a shroud. Let us weep and let us cry, ‘Be roused, Master who grant resurrection to the fallen!”

Come, then, my sisters and brothers, come and let us hasten to the Sun of Righteousness and see that He is resurrected from dead. Let us also pray the words that the Melodist uses to end the great kontakion of Pascha:

“May my dead soul, O Saviour, rise again with you,

Do not grief destroy it, and may it not forget
those songs that sanctify it.
Yes, O Merciful, I implore you, do not abandon me
who am stained with offenses,
For in inequities and in sin my mother bore me.
My Father, holy and compassionate,
may your name be ever hallowed
by my mouth and my lips,
by my voice and my song.
Give me grace as I proclaim your hymns, for you can do so,
who grant resurrection to the fallen.”

Christos Anesti – Christ is Risen – Hristos a inviat – Christos Voskrese
Gei Do Fuk Wood La

Holy Easter 2020

+ Nikitas
Archbishop of Thyateira and Great Britain