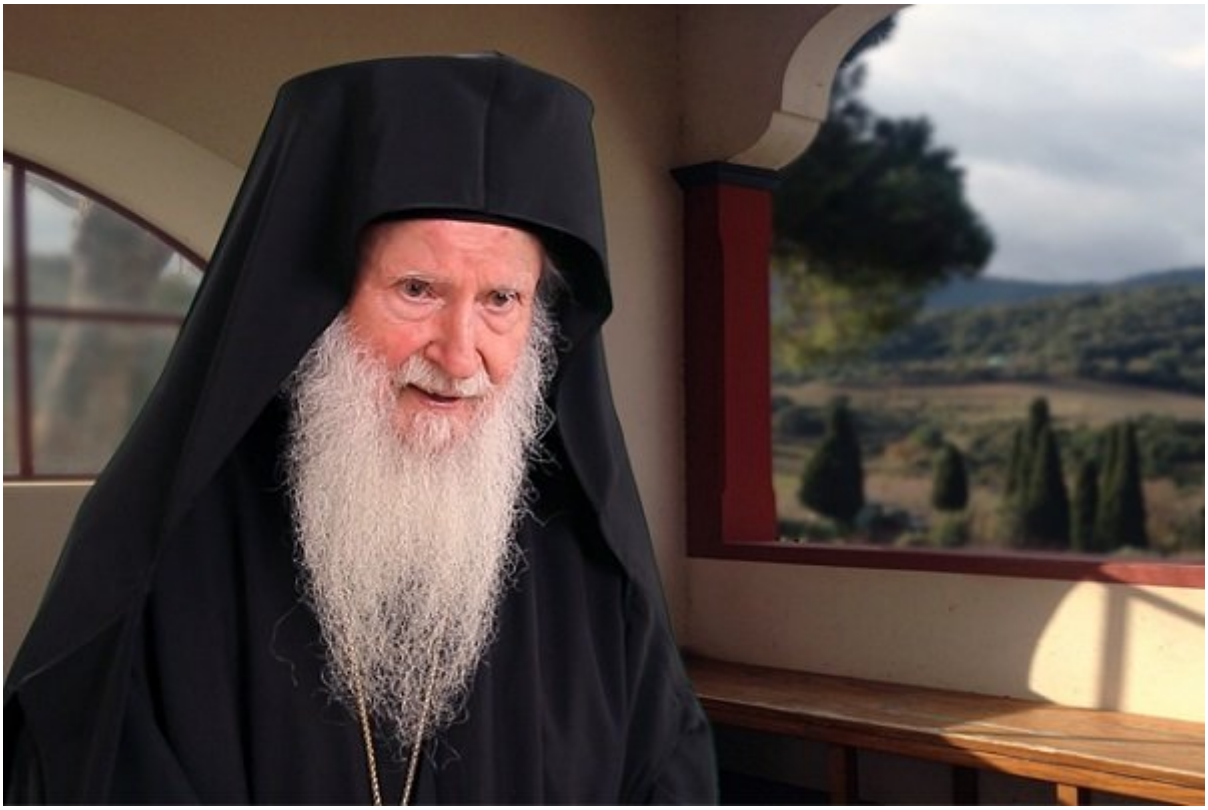
22/04/2020

PASCHAL MESSAGE By His Eminence Sotirios of Pisidia-Easter 2020



Behold, today is the day of the Resurrection: Let us glory in the feast, let us embrace one another in joy… let us forgive everything on Resurrection Day and let us all sing together: Christ is Risen!

Resurrection Day! It is the happiest day for all Orthodox believers, and the greatest celebration of our Orthodox faith that touches all hearts. Even those who for a variety of reasons attend Church infrequently, come for this great feast. Some have to travel for many miles, but they still come to hear the victorious hymn **"CHRIST IS RISEN"!** We see the lit candles held by the faithful, illuminating their faces with joy, and they happily crack the Pascha eggs, exchanging the Resurrection greeting: ***"Christ is Risen!" – "Indeed He is Risen!"*** Moreover, the hearts of those who have grown cold towards relatives, friends, and coworkers due to misunderstandings or other human weaknesses, are made warm again. Many touching incidents occur every year, when people who are estranged meet and embrace each other in forgiveness. The love of the Risen Christ has moved their souls, and they confirm the words of the hymnographer who says:

Let us forgive everything and embrace one another, so that we may proclaim together that Christ is Risen!

What we Orthodox brothers and sisters celebrate on Pascha (Easter) is Love:

The love of our Risen Lord for all of humanity.
Our love for our Redeemer, the resurrected Christ.
And the love we have amongst us.

Love, by nature, is an offering to other people. Otherwise, it is not true love. The disciple of love, the Apostle John, writes: *"We love God because He first loved us"* (1 John 4:19). Jesus' love for His Apostles and for all the disciples who followed Him manifested itself perfectly before His voluntary Passion (see John 13:1). Jesus bent over and washed the feet of His disciples, just as the slaves did during that time. At the Last Supper, He gave them the mystery of the Divine Eucharist, and fed them with His Holy Body and Blood. He was nailed to the Cross for the salvation of all, and He was resurrected with glory, so as to give all of us a life that knows no end in His divine presence.

How can we remain apathetic and untouched, in the face of the countless blessings our Lord has offered us? In every Divine Liturgy we recall these blessings, for which we always thank the Lord. We thank Him for the creation of the world and our own creation, His mercy in our apostasy, His Incarnation through the Holy Spirit and of the Virgin Mary, His teachings, His voluntary passions, His glorious Resurrection, and the deification of our mortal nature into His own God-human Body that ascended into Heaven. We also thank Him for the Holy Spirit, Who forms the Church and sanctifies us. Do we not also confess, like St. John the Apostle, that "We love God, because He first loved us?" Additionally, as faithful disciples of the Lord, do we not also strive to live according to His commandments, as He himself exhorts us: *"If you love me, keep my commandments"* (John 14:15)?

However, in order for our love to be genuine toward our Risen Lord, it must also include our brothers and sisters. St. John is clear on this point: *"If anyone says, " I love God," but hates his brother, he is a liar. For, truly, he who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, how can he love God, Whom he has not seen? This commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must also love his brother "*

(1 John 4: 20-21).

What is needed for us to truly celebrate Pascha is to be reconciled with God, with one another, and with ourselves.

The great Greek poet Dionysios Solomos exhorts us through his lively lyrics to do just this:

Christ is Risen! Young people, old men and girls, everyone, young and old – get ready
inside the crowned with laurel churches, get together in the light of joy,
open your arms peacefully in front of the Saints and kiss one another! …
Enemies and friends alike proclaim: Christ is Risen!

That is why the Orthodox Church also celebrates on this day the ***Vespers of Love.*** We could also call this Service **the meeting of love**, because we come together to rekindle this love among ourselves, to be reconciled, and to exchange one more time the Resurrection greeting. In doing so, we testify that we are truly children of the God of love, Who is continuously sacrificed on the Cross for all humanity.

My beloved Brothers and Sisters, let us all, in a spirit of love and forgiveness, celebrate the glorious Resurrection of our Lord, which leads us from death to life. May we come together joyfully as members of the great spiritual family of the Risen Christ, with no discrimination of race, country or economic status.

Let us proclaim the Glorious Day of Resurrection! Holy Pascha! A Joyous Easter! The Easter that delivers us from sorrow and sanctifies all who believe! Just as the hymnographer sings, and all of us with him, tonight and throughout the Paschal season.

CHRIST IS RISEN!

With paternal wishes and love in the Risen Christ,

+Metropolitan Sotirios of Pisidia

— Source: pemptousia.com