23/04/2020

Paschal Message of Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco



Beloved Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

Χριστὸς Ἀνεστή! Ἀληθῶς Ἀνεστή!
Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!

Among the many details about the resurrection of Christ in the Gospels one fact stands out that is so relevant to our celebration of Pascha this year. In these accounts, those closest to Christ were hiding behind locked doors, as one Gospel states, “out of fear.” Christ, risen from the dead, breaks through those barriers and greets His disciples.

Yes, the risen Christ revealed Himself to the disciples who were hiding behind closed doors.

They were hiding because they were afraid. Their Master had suffered a terrible death on a cross. They were in hiding because they believed that they would be arrested and have the same fate. They were also dismayed. The movement they joined to bring liberation and justice to their land had ended, or at least, so they

thought. In another Gospel account of the resurrection, two disciples said to a traveler, “We had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel,” (Luke 24:21). But Christ reveals Himself to the disciples. He is alive. He has risen from the dead.

Brothers and sisters, from our experience this past week, we can begin to understand what the disciples experienced. We have endured a Holy Week like no other in our memories. We have sheltered behind closed doors, not out of fear of arrest, but as an act of love for the health of our neighbors and ourselves. In these days, we have longed to be in our parishes, but instead have found solace in the live-streamed services, reading the Scriptures, in prayer, and practicing our faith at home. We have wondered, or perhaps even worried, about the effects that this Lent like no other, will have on our Church.

Yet, the risen Christ came to us just as He did to the disciples through those locked doors. The peace He gave to them, He also gives to us. The joy He gave to them, He also gives to us. The confidence He gave them to share the Good News, He also gives to us. So, my beloved brothers and sisters, how can we imitate those first disciples? How will we share the Good News?

While Christ rested in the tomb, the disciples thought their movement had ended. With the resurrection, in reality, it had just only begun.

The risen Christ is our message to the world. The power of death has been vanquished. “For God sent the Son into the world not to condemn the world but that the world might be saved through him” (John 3:17). This is the Good News, par excellence, that the Church proclaims. The candles we have lit are a sign that Christ’s resurrection shines brightly throughout the world. The red eggs we will crack open, signify life emerging from the tomb.

These customs we will use today to proclaim the Resurrection. Our challenge is to share the Resurrection, not just tonight. His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew recently said, “The entire life of the Church is Pascha. Resurrection is the entire faith, ethos and culture of Orthodoxy.”

Armed with the message of the resurrection, Orthodox Christians have transformed the world by working “against everything distorted and malignant both in ourselves and in the damaged structure and fabric of a suffering creation” (For the Life of the World: Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church, §4). We have once again received the Good News of the Resurrection. We have, once again, been challenged to continue what Christ and His disciples began.

May the Risen Christ be with you all!

Christ is Risen! Χριστός Ἀνεστή!

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