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EASTER MESSAGE 2021 By Metropolitan Sotirios of Pisidia



“Christ is risen from the dead,
trampling Death by death,
and bestowed life to those in the tombs.”

This resurrection Paean, which is sung repeatedly- about sixty times- on the night of the Resurrection, proclaims to the faithful that the God-man Lord Jesus Christ, through His glorious Resurrection has defeated Death, the greatest enemy of man.

It is truly striking that during the greatest feast of our Church, a feast of ineffable joy, there are some words such as “dead”, “death”, “tombs that are mentioned repeatedly, which make some people depressed, just by hearing them! It is true that, before the Resurrection of our Lord, these concepts were fearsome! They caused terror, depression, melancholy and despair! Yet, the Lord, through His holy Resurrection, has completely changed their meaning!

With His death, the Lord “trampled” death, just as He is depicted on the icon of the Resurrection: beneath the gates of Hades that Christ broke, an old man is depicted

in a dark cave disheveled and naked, tied in chains and frightened! That is what Death was reduced to. The central event of Easter, the Resurrection of Christ, is the victory that abolishes death. This fact makes St. John Chrysostom, following the Apostle Paul (1 Cor. 15:55) to exclaim triumphantly: “O death, where is your sting”? that is, where is the poisonous nail by which you used to kill people? “Christ is risen and you are annihilated ..., Christ is risen and the tomb is emptied of the dead ... Christ having risen from the dead, has become the first fruits of those who had fallen asleep.” (Paschal Catechism of St. John Chrysostom).

Death no longer exists; he has been conquered and disarmed. Christ broke the heavy tombstones that covered the dead; and, just as Christ came out of the tomb alive, so the people, who are united with Him by faith will be resurrected. The forerunner of this is what the Evangelist Matthew reports: “the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many” (Matt. 27: 52-53).

Fancy that! If with the Resurrection of Christ, came the unexpected news, that the millions of our fellow human beings who have recently died from COVID-19 were resurrected! How the whole world would rejoice and more so their grieved relatives!

My Brethren, the Resurrection of Christ offers us news that is even more joyful: not only one or two million, but also all those who have lived and will live on this earth and have believed in the true God will be resurrected.

Through the Resurrection of Christ, the graveyards were transformed into Cemeteries, and the time will come when the bodies of those who have died will wake up, they will come out of the graves and will be reunited with their immortal souls, in an eternal glory! In one of the prayers of Pentecost says: “In departing our bodies to dwell in You, our God, there is no death for Your servants, Lord, but rather a change from the more sorrowful to the better and more pleasing, to rest, to joy.” (Kneeling prayer of Pentecost) We the faithful experience this joy of the Resurrection of Christ and thus we sing triumphantly: “Today we celebrate the annihilation of death”. “This Passover is the Passover of the Lord, in that Christ our God made us pass from death to life and from earth to heaven” (Paschal Canon, First Ode).

My dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord, the hymns of the resurrection proclaim to us that, the Resurrection of Christ is not a pleasant event that we see from a distance. Since we have “clothed” Christ through Holy Baptism, as the Apostle Paul writes, and we are united with Christ through Holy Communion, the Resurrection of

our Lord is also our own Resurrection. We also are participants of His Resurrection! That is why the Church urges us again: “O faithful, let us partake of the new drink”; Come and drink a new water, which springs from the Holy Sepulcher and gives us incorruptibility and security. The “immortal water”, which is sought in folklore, it is a reality for us. We drink the immortal water, of which the Lord spoke to the Samaritan woman (John 4:14) and we acquire immortality, incorruptibility and eternal life!

We rejoice for all that the Lord has offered to us through His Resurrection. We rejoice in a true, spiritual joy that reaches the depths of our hearts. A joy that nothing can take away from us: neither poverty, nor disease, nor danger, nor all the difficulties of life, as the Lord Himself told us: “no one will be able to take away your joy” (John 16:22).

I wish, therefore, to all of you, this joy of our Risen Lord to reign in your hearts during the Resurrection season and throughout your life.

CHRIST IS RISEN!

With warm paternal love,

+ Metropolitan Sotirios of Pisidia