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PASCHA 2022 MESSAGE OF H.H.B. THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS III



“Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay” (Matthew 28, 5-6).

With these comforting words, the Myrrh-bearing Women were encouraged by “the angel that hath come down from heaven and moved the stone of the tomb”, where the crucified Jesus Christ the Nazarene had been buried. The Myrrh-bearing Women, who bore the myrrh in tears, were astounded by the vision of the empty tomb, for this reason, the angel encouraged them with his presence and with the words: “fear not ye”. Appearing “like lightning and white like snow”, he was sitting at the tomb and said to the women: “I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen”. And he was not ashamed to call Him crucified, for this was the good chapter”, according to Saint Chrysostom.

The bright like lightning angel announced something unheard of and impossible for

the people. He announced what could happen only by the providence, the will and the power of God. That Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son and Word of God, and crucified in the flesh, having been buried, was risen from the dead and co-resurrected the human flesh He had received along with the whole Adam, by a mighty hand. Out of love for man, Saint Chrysostom explains, “having risen from the royal thrones, God entered the earth and even Hades, and the devil became an opponent not to a naked God but to a God hidden within the human nature” and we see “death being released by death and the curse annulling the curse, and through these, the tyranny of the devil in all things he prevailed is now abolished”. Indeed, through the Saviour’s death, the tyranny of death has been abolished. “Through the Cross, joy came unto the whole world”. Hades became bitter and therefore he was mocked, thinking that he received a common mortal. That is why, in the faith and power of Christ’s Resurrection, the Apostle of nations rephrases the prophesy: “Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” (1 Cor. 15, 54-55).

The Myrrh-bearing women experienced the Resurrection not only from the vision of the empty Tomb and the Angel and the hearing of his words but also from the vision of the Resurrected Lord Himself. “Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me” (Matthew 28, 9-10). Indeed, for forty days the Lord appeared many times as the Apostle Paul testifies, “And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles” (1 Corinthians 15, 5-7), speaking to them, confirming His crucified and resurrected body, receiving food and eating before them. Finally, receiving the worship of the eleven in Galilee, the mountain where Jesus had appointed them, He ordered them to go and teach all nations (Matthew 28, 16-19).

Fulfilling this command, the Apostles received the Holy Spirit and preached unto the ends of the world “the one they had seen with their own eyes and touched with their own hands”, they enchanted the universe, becoming the twelve pillars of the body of the Church, while Christ is its cornerstone. The body of the Church that has been built by the Lord, for which He said “the gates of hell shall not overcome it” (Matthew 16,18), continues throughout the centuries His sanctifying and redeeming mission through His Disciples and their heirs, the Bishops and Priests. In its crucified-and-resurrected course in the world, the Church, vivified by the blood of the Cross, from which it was created, conveys power, hope and joy for the

creation, maintenance, refreshment and restoration of man from the ruins and the ashes of wars, repeating the comforting invitation of Christ, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11,28).

The Church of Jerusalem, appointed by the Resurrected Christ Himself to serve at the places of His appearance in the flesh, being under pressure, especially recently, by radical extremist and hostile to it elements, however, not crushed by them, fights bravely in one accord and unity for the rights of the Christian presence and its flock in the Holy Land and welcomes the pious pilgrims during their pilgrimage as its own flock and sends to them and its pious flock all over the world the Paschal greeting “Christ is risen from the dead, by death He hath tumbled down death and to those in the grave He hath given life!”

In the Holy City of Jerusalem, Pascha 2022

Fervent supplicant for all before God,

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of the Holy City of Jerusalem

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