21/04/2022

Archiepiscopal Encyclical on the Great and Holy Pascha



Unto the Most Reverend and Right Reverend Hierarchs, Pious Priests and Deacons, the Monks and Nuns, Presidents and Members of Parish Councils, Honorable Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Members of Leadership 100, the Day and Afternoon Schools, Philoptochos Societies, the Youth, Greek Orthodox Organizations, and the entirety of the Christ-named Plenitude of the Holy

Archdiocese of America.

My Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Christ descended alone to the Gates of Hades, He returned taking many spoils of His victory.

(Verse of the Synaxarion of Pascha)

What a journey our Lord took for the sake of our salvation! What pains did He not endure? Not only did He descend from the heights of Heaven to earth through his Incarnation, but through His Death on the Cross he descended into the lowest depths of human experience. As we chant on Pascha night: Κατῆλθες ἐν τοῖς κατωτάτοις τῆς γῆς – into death itself, even though He is the Author of Life.

This is how the Lord Jesus, Who is the New Adam and the First-Born of the Dead, redeems the mass of humanity. He undergoes a single human life and death; He died alone upon the Cross, forsaken and abandoned. Alone did He descend into Hades, that he might free all those imprisoned there from ages past. By His flesh, which He took from the womb of His Virgin Mother, He assumes the totality of the human race. There is no person who is not connected to Him through His Incarnation. By living a perfect life in a willing, conscience way, He makes possible perfection for every human being through metanoia, which is as much transformation as it is repentance and turning from selfishness to God. Finally, using the Cross to bridge Heaven and earth, He descends to the lowest depths, to find us and to bring us home to Heaven.

As the Synaxarion affirms: “He returned taking many spoils of His victory.” This is why we cry out with our hearts aflame with joy, even as our candles shine brightly and dispel the gloom of night:

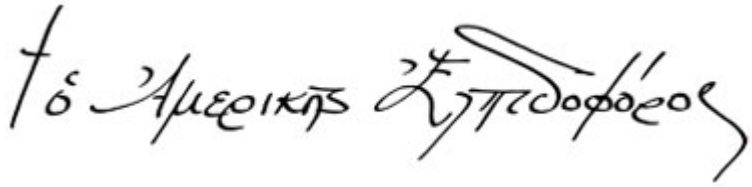
Christ is risen from the dead, by death trampling down upon death,

and to those in the tombs He has granted life!

Therefore, my beloved Christians, let us honor His journey from Heaven to earth, from earth to Hades, and back again for our salvation. Let us embrace one another with love and compassion, forgetting no one and forgiving everyone. Thus, we will rise from the lowest depths of our struggles and challenges, to the celestial heights of God’s glory and life everlasting.

Χριστὸς Ἀνέστη! Ἀληθῶς Ἀνέστη!

Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!



† ELPIDOPHOROS

Archbishop of America