26/04/2022

Metropolitan Cleopas of Sweden and All Scandinavia – Episcopal Encyclical for Holy Easter 2022



Reverend Fathers,
Honorable Civic and Community Leaders,

Dearly Beloved Stewards, Friends and Benefactors
of the Holy Metropolis of Sweden,

ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΝΕΣΤΗ! – CHRIST IS RISEN!

Beginning from tonight's Resurrection vigil and henceforth, the Paschal paean proclaiming victory over death and Hades, the triumphant cry of "Χριστὸς Ἀνέστη – Christ is Risen" shall be joyously heard from our lips and those of the faithful all across the world!

Describing today's feast of feasts and celebration of celebrations, the great Greek author Alexandros Papadiamantis characteristically notes that "The Church casts off its robes of mourning and dons its brilliant white vestments, thus reflecting the

purity and radiance of the Angel who rolled away the stone sealing the entrance to the tomb".

The Church celebrates and the faithful are filled with happiness and delight by the proclamation that "the Lord has Risen"! And this joy is multiplied by the testimony of St. Paul the Apostle to the Nations: "knowing that Christ having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over him" (Rom. 6:9). Following the Resurrection of the Lord, we experience the human dimensions of this event; that is, its salvific reference toward mankind.

Over the past few weeks, the war in Ukraine has undoubtedly served as a source of pain and sorrow; a meeting with death that should not have occurred! We have witnessed people dying, children being left to grow up as orphans, victims of ethnic hatred, physical and spiritual anguish, brutality and irrationality, a climate of toxicity and perverse behavior. These are all conditions to which man is led when he turns his back on God and deifies himself.

In a sermon given just a few days ago, His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew remarked very wisely that "a war never solves any problems, it only creates new ones". The victims in war-torn Ukraine have their own cross to bear and are personifying St. Nectarios of Pentapolis' characteristic adage: "The Cross is a part of my life"!

Having crucified ourselves together with Christ and having joined in the suffering of the our embattled fellow men and women who have been displaced from their homes and forced to flee as refugees, let us renew our hope through the empirical knowledge that the Risen Lord shall be the one Who will heal all these tragic events, that He shall grant the strength to overcome sorrows, the expectation of joy, and the indisputable promise of eternal life.

Surrounded as we are by the unwaning light of the Resurrection that "illuminates all" and lights up the universe from one end to the other, we are called to renew ourselves in the timeless values of life, peace, justice, and respect for the human person, and to share in the pain with those who are suffering, share in the grief with those who are mourning, and share our common spiritual home, the Church, with the refugees.

We are called to overcome whatever opposition or differences may exist between us and savor the singular gift of life, the journey to Emmaus together with the Risen Savior, and the earnest desire to be in communion with each another, love for our brethren all across the earth, devoid elitism and stereotyping, especially

considering that “the others” are in reality our “alter ego”.

Let us hearken to the Lord’s command to “take courage, be of good cheer” and let us enjoy the Paschal feast, experiencing our personal Resurrection and victory against every evil, pain, and sorrow – and perhaps, against our very selves!

With all my paternal love and many Paschal wishes in the Risen Lord,

† Metropolitan Cleopas of Sweden and All Scandinavia

Metropolisofsweden