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Athens, April 1/14, 2020

To be read in Church

Protocol no. 3026

RESURRECTIONAL (PASCHAL) MESSAGE FOR 2020

*“By Thy Passion, O Christ, we were freed from the passions,
and by Thy Resurrection we were delivered from corruption. O Lord, glory to Thee”!*

Beloved Fathers and Brethren, children in the Risen Lord:

The Holy Resurrection of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ constitutes the greatest miracle of our Christian Faith. Exultation prevails on account of the freedom from the passions and the deliverance from the corruption of sin, the Devil, and death that it has bestowed upon mankind. The minds of the Faithful shine with the Light of the Resurrection that has filled things in Heaven, things on earth, and things beneath the earth, and the hearts of Christians leap with joy and gladness.

No matter how much progress science makes, it will never grant us as much eternal and victorious light as does the Light of the Resurrection. And no matter how many inventions and discoveries may be devised for the betterment of the life of men on earth, no one will ever offer us as much true joy and felicity as does the joy and felicity of the Resurrection.

Behold why: when death comes, even from an invisible and infinitesimal virus, as is now the case with the coronavirus, the lights of science are extinguished, notwithstanding the assiduous, praiseworthy, and exhaustive efforts of its devotees to confront this evil. In contrast, for anyone who enters into the true life, even through biological death—for the truly faithful Orthodox Christian—the Light of Christ becomes incomparably more radiant and more abundant. As for the joys of the world, whatever they may promise, however desirable they may appear, there comes a point, sooner or later, when they disappear, whereas the joy of Christ’s Resurrection is boundless in eternity and never ceases, but only increases.

Now, in this life, we have only a foretaste of that eternal blessedness. And if, in this life, it is difficult for any Christian soul to describe its inward sense and experience of the Resurrection, what are we to say about that inexpressible infinity of eternal good things which the Risen Lord has prepared for all who believe in Him and love Him and which He ardently desires that they enjoy?

* * *

Yet, dear Brothers and Sisters, how was Christ the God-Man victorious? How did He free and deliver us from the tyranny of the passions and corruption?

By His spotless Passion and His life-giving Cross. “I gave My back to scourges, and My cheeks to blows, and I turned not My face away from the shame of spitting,” He proclaims from of old through the Prophet Esaias (50:6). The Author of our Faith was

condemned and underwent dreadful scourging out of love for us, His ungrateful creatures, for the remission of our sins. They mocked the Messiah, put a crown of thorns on Him, smote Him, and spat on Him. By His voluntary sufferings and wounds we were healed of our diseases. And the King of all underwent all of this with majestic silence and forbearance, in order to teach us, too, to endure every tribulation uncomplainingly. In the end He suffered the most fearful and ignominious death on the Cross, “despising the shame” (Hebrews 12:2).

He underwent all this, so that suffering might henceforth be sanctified and might indeed become a cause of joy for all who undergo it for the true Faith. “I rejoice in my sufferings” (Colossians 1:24) declares the Apostle Paul, and he affirms elsewhere that “we glory in tribulations” (Romans 5:3). For this reason, the Saints of our Church, the Martyrs, Ascetics, and Confessors of the Faith, rejoiced when they underwent privations, sacrifice, and every kind of suffering for the sake of our Beloved Savior. And we, in our days, endure confinement and misery, affliction and distress, and especially so on account of what is, for many, an enforced non-physical presence in our Churches, to the end that we may together make clear, liturgically and with thanksgiving, our unshakable conviction that Life is more powerful than death and that the Holy Resurrection of our Savior overcomes all fear of death.

Without being harbingers of doom, we can say that all that is happening is probably the prelude to greater tribulations. Yet we emphasize that nothing should deprive us of the invincible joy of the Resurrection and the sure hope of victory. Let nothing impair our faith and patience, let nothing cause us to be despairing or downcast. If we rejoice in the hope of Divine help and consolation, then we will become like our heroic forebears and the Saints of our Faith. But if we become fainthearted and lose our nerve, then we fall short of them and we urgently need to reinforce our faith and our spiritual struggle for repentance and for the healing of our souls. Let us beseech our Risen Lord and God that He endow us with faith, Grace, and strength, so that we may feel spiritual joy even in the midst of difficulties, so that we may be ready to sacrifice everything for the sake of Christ’s love and may live eternally in the Light of the Resurrection.

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Dear and beloved Children in the Risen Lord:

Who crucified Christ? The evil and envious rulers of Israel (Annas and Caiaphas) and the unjust authorities, in the wake of pressure and fear (Pilate). However, our Risen Lord is the Judge also of the rulers of this earth, and the rulers and authorities of this world will give account before Him of how they handled the authority that He gave them. Let us, the faithful, take comfort in the fact that the Pilates and Caiaphases cannot do anything against us except what the Lord permits, and also in how every evil that occurs by God’s leave eventually proves to be for the good, since we are tested in order that we may become worthy of eternal glory. Dark men, like the wicked Devil, work dark deeds, but no one can lord it over the believer who has “soul and Christ” in him.

Thus, let every honorable member of our Holy Orthodox Church exclaim with the Psalmist: “The Lord is my helper and defender; my heart hoped in Him, and I am helped; and my flesh hath flourished anew, and willingly shall I praise Him” (Psalm 27:7). So let us unceasingly hymn and glorify our Lord and God Who is risen from the dead, and let us cry out triumphantly:

Christ is Risen! Indeed, He is Risen!

THE HOLY SYNOD

The Archbishop

† KALLINIKOS of Athens

The Members

- † ATHANASIOS of Larisa and Platamon
- † IOUSTINOS of Euripos and Euboea
- † GERONTIOS of Piraeus and Salamis
- † CHRYSOSTOMOS of Attica and Boeotia
- † GREGORIOS of Thessalonica
- † PHOTIOS of Demetrias
- † MOSES of Toronto
- † DEMETRIUS of America
- † AMBROSIOS of Philippi and Maroneia
- † CYPRIAN of Oropos and Phyle
- † AMBROSE of Methone
- † SILVANO of Luni
- † KLEMES of Gardikion
- † AUXENTIOS of Etna and Portland
- † THEODOSIOS of Bresthena
- † CHRISTODOULOS of Theoupolis
- † MAXIMUS of Pelagonia

[signed and sealed as a BONA FIDE COPY]

The First Secretary of the Holy Synod

† Photios of Demetrias