



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

GREAT AND HOLY PASCHA 2015

The Very Reverend and Reverend Clergy

Honorable Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Esteemed Members of the Metropolitan Council, Esteemed Members of the Parish Councils, Philoptochos Societies, Faculty and Students of the Catechetical and Greek Afternoon Schools, Directors and Participants of all Youth Organizations, and all devout Orthodox Christians of the Greek Orthodox Communities of our Holy Metropolis of New Jersey

Christ is Risen ! Truly He is Risen !

My Beloved,

"O Christ Savior, we were but yesterday buried with you, and we shall rise with you in your Resurrection. We were but yesterday crucified with you. Glorify us with you in your Kingdom" (Third Ode of the Paschal Canon). "He rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:4).

By His Resurrection, the Crucified One is declared to be the Son of God with power. The highest place was given to Him, who died on the cross, far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named. Christ is corporeally present in the highest heaven. With His Resurrection power, Christ shattered the captive power of the evil one. Now we the believers have a new standing in the resurrected Christ and are required to walk in the newness of life. The atonement of the Cross is confirmed, ratified, sealed, and made enduring by Christ's rising from the dead. Our justification depends on a risen life present in us because Christ is sacramentally present in us.

Now we are celebrating the true and holy Pascha of the Lord. As the children of Israel crossed over out of Egypt into the promised land, the Incarnate Son of Almighty God crossed over from this world to His Father's Throne of Power. Tonight, we have crossed over with Him from the eternal darkness to the unwaning light and everlasting love, peace, and justice of the Kingdom of the Heavens. As Jonah emerged from the belly of the whale on the third day, Christ rose from the depths of the earth on the third day and made the human being incorruptible by nature. If a dead man was raised to life when his body touched the bones of Elisha, how much more incomparably glorious is it for the Maker of mankind to be raised by the power of God the Father! Tonight, "Christ the Lord delivered us from slavery to liberty, from darkness to light, from death to life, from tyranny to eternal royalty; and made us a new priesthood and an eternal people personal to Him. He is the Pascha of our salvation," said St. Melito of Sardis.

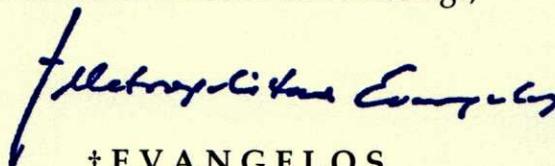
St. John Chrysostom once said about the Resurrection of Christ: "Let us consider how great a thing it is to see Him, no longer in a mortal body, nor doing common human acts, but with Angels for His body-guard, while we ourselves are also in all-pure bodies, and are looking at Him, and enjoying all the rest of that happiness which surpasses all speech. Let us do our very utmost, so as not to fall from so great a glory. For there is nothing difficult if we are willing...For if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him. What does it mean to suffer? If we bear our troubles and our persecutions; if we walk in the narrow way. For the narrow way is in itself laborious, but it is made easy by our own set purpose, by our hope of the future. 'For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things that are seen, but at the things which are not seen' (2 Corinthians 4:17-18). Let us then transfer our gaze to heaven, and be continually picturing to ourselves and beholding what is there. For if we always dwell on that, we shall...not feel the burden of earthly griefs. On the contrary, we shall even deride these things and the like, and nothing will be able to enslave or to uplift us, if only we direct our longing to heaven, if we look to that Love."

We must recognize that we are a new creation in Christ and that we must never return to our former instability. "No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). We ought to allow our steps in life from now on to be directed by the Lord and He will prevent us from falling into the quagmire of sin. He will stretch out His all-encompassing hand to keep us on the solid ground of virtue.

"Having beheld the Resurrection of Christ, let us worship the holy Lord Jesus, the only sinless one. We worship your Cross, O Christ, and we hymn and glorify your holy Resurrection. For you are our God, we know no other but you, we name you by name. Come all the faithful, let us worship the holy Resurrection of Christ; for behold through the Cross, joy has come in all the world. Ever blessing the Lord, we hymn His Resurrection. For having endured the Cross for us, He has destroyed death by death. O divine, O beloved, O sweetest voice! You promised truly that you would be with us to the end of the age. With this pledge as the anchor of our hope, we rejoice. Great most holy Pascha, O Christ; Wisdom, Word, and Power of God, grant us to partake of you more perfectly in the unwaning day of your Kingdom" (The Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom).

My beloved spiritual children in the Risen Lord, I wholeheartedly extend to you my abiding love and fervent prayers on this most joyous Feast of our Master's Resurrection.

With Paternal Love and Blessings,



† EVANGELOS

Metropolitan of New Jersey