



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

Great and Holy Pascha 2019

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

My Beloved in the Lord,

Χριστός Ανέστη! Christ is risen!

Today we have been rescued from the ancient curse of death and new life has been granted to all of humanity. For our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ has risen from the dead, destroyed the gates of Hades, and has freed us from corruption, thus confirming that He is the Life and the Light of the world. Hades was mortified when it saw Christ, the King of all, and he shuddered in His very presence.

Whereas before *“all of creation trembled when it saw you hanging on the tree”*, now all creation rejoices as it witnesses you breaking the gates of hell. To those who have been captives in Hades, they have been freed by Him who liberates all humanity. To those who are dead, they have been raised by Him who is the Source of Life. To those who are in darkness, they have been illumined with Christ’s divine Light. To those who are in anguish, they have been comforted with His sublime presence. To those who are sinful, they have been redeemed by Him who suffered for our sake. All humanity that has gone before us has received a taste of His everlasting Kingdom through His resurrection.

The resurrection of Christ not only affects those who have died, but also has significance for those of us who still live. His resurrection is a confirmation that we too will rise at the end of times and will have the opportunity to live with Him in Paradise. We are offered this magnificent gift from Christ through His Cross, but it necessitates that we too carry our cross for our Lord tells us, *“If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me”* (Matthew 16:24). Let us, therefore, run towards Him in our daily lives and *“...set aside all the cares of life”* so that, when God calls us to Him, we may partake in the Christ’s resurrection; for as St. Paul says, *“For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall surely be united with Him in a resurrection like His”* (Romans 6:5).

It is with these thoughts in mind, my dearly beloved in the Lord, that I implore you, as you celebrate Christ's resurrection, the feast of feasts, to also remember all the gifts our Lord has given to us and to continue sharing these gifts with others. The resurrection of Christ is by no means the end of our prayer life or of our charity, rather it is the beginning of a New Day and a New Life. In this new beginning, we have been given spiritual strength in Christ's resurrection. In this new beginning we have been imbued with the Light of Christ so that we too may share it with our friends, our neighbors, and the world. In this new beginning we have been given additional gifts to share our faith and to thereby bring people closer to Christ by living our faith. Let us never cease to do the work our Lord has commanded us so that, when we are called forth to judgement at the Common Resurrection, we may experience the inimitable joy of the Kingdom of God.

It is my sincerest hope and prayer that as we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord, God, and Savior, Jesus Christ that we spread the good news of His dominion over death to the world. May our Risen Lord bless each and every one of you and your families with an abundance of renewed faith and health so that we may exclaim with the utmost joy, *"Christ is risen from the dead, by death trampling down upon death and to those in the tombs he has granted life."*

With Paternal Love and Blessings in the Risen Christ,



† E V A N G E L O S
Metropolitan of New Jersey



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Πρός τόν εὐλαβέστατον Ἱερόν Κλῆρον,
Τούς Ἐντιμοτάτους Ἀρχοντας τοῦ Οἰκουμενικοῦ ἡμῶν Πατριαρχείου,
Τούς Προέδρους καί τά Μέλη τῶν Ἐκκλησιαστικῶν Συμβουλίων,
Τάς Προέδρους καί τά Μέλη τῶν Φιλοπτώχων Ἀδελφοτήτων,
Τούς διδάσκοντας καί διδασκομένους τῶν Κατηχητικῶν καί Ἑλληνικῶν Σχολείων,
Τάς Ὁργανώσεις τῆς Νεολαίας καί ἅπαν τό Χριστεπώνυμον πλήρωμα τῶν εὐσεβῶν
Ὁρθοδόξων Χριστιανῶν τῆς Ἱερᾶς Μητροπόλεως Νέας Ἱερσείης.

*«Εἰ δέ Χριστός οὐκ ἐγήγερται, ματαία ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν»
(Α' Κορ. 15, 17)*

Ἀγαπητοί ἐν Χριστῷ ἀδελφοί,

Χριστός Ἀνέστη!

Σύμπασα ἡ κτίσις, «Οὐρανός τε καί γῆ καί τά καταχθόνια», ἐορτάζει, πανηγυρίζει καί εὐφραίνεται μέ τό συγκλονιστικό, ἐλπιδοφόρο καί σωτήριο μήνυμα πού ἀνέτειλε ἀπό τό κενό μνημεῖο τοῦ Ἀναστάσιος Χριστοῦ. Ὁ «δι' ἡμᾶς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους καί διὰ τήν ἡμετέραν σωτηρίαν» ἐνανθρωπίσας Ἰησοῦς, πού θανατώθηκε ἐπάνω στόν σταυρό, διαπέρασε τή φθορά τοῦ θανάτου, νίκησε τή θνητότητα καί κατήργησε τή δύναμη τοῦ διαβόλου πού ταλαιπωροῦσε γιά αἰῶνες τό ἀνθρώπινο γένος. Ἡ θυσία Του, πού προσφέρθηκε ὡς «λύτρον ἀντί πολλῶν», ἐξασφάλισε στήν ἀμαυρωθεῖσα ἀνθρώπινη φύση τή σωτηρία τῆς.

Ὁ «Μονογενῆς Υἱός καί Λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ» σαρκώθηκε γιά νά πεθάνει, τονίζει μέ ἔμφραση ὁ ἅγιος Ἀθανάσιος, καθῶς μόνον μέ τόν θάνατο Του ἦταν δυνατή ἡ Ἀνάσταση. Χωρίς τήν Ἀνάσταση, ἡ χριστιανική πίστις θά ἦταν μάταιη καί ἀνωφελής, χωρίς κανένα οὐσιαστικό περιεχόμενο, ὅπως ὑπογραμμίζει ὁ Ἀπόστολος τῶν ἐθνῶν Παῦλος, γράφοντας «*Εἰ δέ Χριστός οὐκ ἐγήγερται, ματαία ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν*». Καί ὁ ἱερός Αὐγουστίνος ἐπεξηγεῖ: «*Δέν εἶναι καθόλου γιά μας μεγάλο, ἂν πιστεύουμε ὅτι ὁ Χριστός πέθανε. Αὐτό τό πιστεύουν καί οἱ εἰδωλολάτρες. Καί οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι. Καί ὅλοι οἱ ἁμαρτωλοί. Ὅλοι τό πιστεύουν, ὅτι πέθανε. Ἡ πίστις τῶν χριστιανῶν εἶναι ἡ Ἀνάσταση τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Αὐτό εἶναι γιά μᾶς τό μεγάλο. Πιστεύουμε ὅτι ὁ Χριστός ἀναστήθηκε*».

Ἡ Ἀνάσταση τοῦ Κυρίου ἀποτελεῖ τόν ἀκρογωνιαῖο λίθο πάνω στόν ὁποῖο οἰκοδομεῖται ἐδῶ καί δύο χιλιάδες χρόνια ἡ χριστιανική πίστις. Μέ αὐτήν ἀναζωογονήθηκε ἡ πεπτωκυῖα ἀνθρώπινη φύση καί ἀπέκτησε τή δυνατότητα τῆς ἀνάστασης καί τῆς συμμετοχῆς τῆς στήν ἐπουράνια Βασιλεία. Ὁ Χριστός ὄχι μόνο ἀναστήθηκε ὁ ἴδιος, ἀλλά

«συνεγείρας τόν Προπάτορα ἡμῶν», ἀνέστησε ὅλο τό ἀνθρώπινο γένος καί ἀπεδείχθη «ἀρχηγός τῆς ζωῆς», τέλειος Θεός, ἀπεσταλμένος ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς γιά τή σωτηρία τοῦ ἀνθρωπίνου γένους. Τό μήνυμα τῆς Αναστάσεως τοῦ Χριστοῦ εἶναι τό πλέον αισιόδοξο καί χαρμόσυνο γιά ὅλη τήν ἀνθρωπότητα, πού προσπαθεῖ νά ἰσορροπήσει ἀνάμεσα στό θαῦμα τῆς ζωῆς καί στό μυστήριο τοῦ θανάτου. Εἶναι τό κατ' ἐξοχήν μήνυμα τῆς ἀγάπης τοῦ Θεοῦ στόν ἄνθρωπο. Ὁ Χριστιανός πλέον γνωρίζει ὅτι, μέ τή δύναμη τοῦ Αναστάντος, θά ἀναστηθεῖ μία ἡμέρα καί αὐτός καί θά λάβει νέο σῶμα ἄφθαρτο, ἔνδοξο καί ἀθάνατο, πεποίθηση πού ἀποτυπώνεται καί στό Σύμβολο τῆς Πίστεώς μας μέ τό «προσδοκῶ ἀνάστασιν νεκρῶν καί ζωὴν τοῦ μέλλοντος αἰῶνος».

Ἀγαπητοί μου ἀδελφοί,

Ὡς Ἐπίσκοπος καί πνευματικός σας πατέρας, εὐχομαι ὀλόψυχα σέ ὅλους καί στόν καθένα ξεχωριστά, ἡ πίστη στήν Ἀνάσταση τοῦ Κυρίου μας νά γίνει ἡ γέφυρα διά τῆς ὁποίας θά μετέλθουμε ἀπό τά πρόσκαιρα στά αἰώνια, ἀπό τά φθαρτά στά ἄφθαρτα, ἀπό τά γήινα στά ἐπουράνια. Τό ἀνέσπερο φῶς τῆς Αναστάσεως ἄς καταυγάζει τή σκέψη μας, ἄς φωτίζει τόν νοῦ μας καί ἄς στηρίζει τήν ὑπαρξή μας. Ἄς προσέλθουμε «λαμπαδηφόροι» στό Κοινό Ποτήριο τῆς ἀναστάσιμης θείας Εὐχαριστίας, γιά νά προγευθοῦμε τή σωτηρία καί τήν κατά χάριν θέωσή μας. Ἄς καινουργήσουμε τίς σκέψεις, τά ὄνειρα καί τίς ἐπιθυμίες μας μέσα στό φῶς τῆς Ἀνάστασης καί τῆς ἀληθινῆς καί ἀναφαίρετης χαρᾶς πού προσφέρει ὁ νικητής καί θριαμβευτής τοῦ θανάτου, ὁ Ἀναστάς Ἰησοῦς.

Μέ Ἀναστάσιμες πατρικές εὐχές!

Ο ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΤΗΣ



† Ὁ Νέας Ἱερσέης ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΟΣ