

Paschal Encyclical 2023 of the Diocese of Pallini and Western Europe

*After two days will He revive us:
on the third day He will raise us up,
and we shall live in His sight.*
Hosea 6:2

In the above-cited passage, Hosea, Prophet of the Old Testament, explained to us aforetime the Holy Resurrection that would take place: After two days, when our Lord was in the tomb, He revived us; calling all the dead to His Kingdom. And on the third day He raised us up; those in Hades - and through the overthrow of Hades and the steadfast promise - all of us as well. "And let them be ready against the third day, for on the third day the Lord will descend upon Mount Sinai before all the people" (Exodus 19:11). "And it came to pass on the third day, as the morning drew nigh, there were voices and lightnings and a dark cloud on Mount Sinai: the voice of the trumpet sounded loud, and all the people in the camp trembled" (Exodus 19:16). It is on this blessed third day, when our Churches are brightly illumined with the light of the Resurrection that we all tremble from the joy of the Most Holy Resurrection.

Christ has won our victory, taking on our very nature while not losing in any way His divinity. As St. John of Damascus explains, "This is why the incarnation of God the Word took place: That our nature which sinned, fell, and was corrupted become victorious over the tyrant and thus be freed." This is what we joyfully celebrate in these days.

And why have we not been awarded the Resurrected body from the very first day that Christ is risen? Firstly, because we have all sinned while in this fallen flesh and our bodies all have the common debt. And secondly, so that no one might inherit the pride of the first-fallen one who forgot that his eternal state was God's gift.

St. Irenaeus of Lyons instructs us, saying, "The Lord, ... receiving into His bosom the ancient fathers, has regenerated them into the life of God, He having been made Himself the beginning of those that live, as Adam became the beginning of those who die." In this Holy Feast, we have been transformed from our inheritance of corruption through Adam into our inheritance of the life of God. Need we seek any miracle besides this? The Apostle Paul writing to the Corinthians says, "For it is needful for this corruptible to put on itself incorruption and this mortal to put on itself immortality" (I Corinthians 15:53). Every soul, then, by reason of its birth, has its nature in Adam until it is born again in Christ. Today, dearest in Christ faithful, we rejoice in this exchange of our corruption for incorruption through Christ's Holy Resurrection.

Could any feast be more dear, holy, or close to us than this feast of the Resurrection? Christ has given us victory over the biggest tyrant; death and corruption. Which other tyrant can do us harm? Christ, in the Holy Gospel tells us, "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be made full" (John 15:11). Today, all of us are participants in this one insurmountable joy; the joy of the Resurrection of Christ, the joy of our regeneration.

Interceding that your own joy be made full, and that you may lift yourself above the times with all their divisions and passions,

With love in our Christ Risen from the dead,

+ Philaretos,

Bishop of Pallini and Western Europe