

PASCHAL ENCYCLICAL

Diocese of Boston and the Americas

Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!

With these words the angel, clothed in a long white garment, first greeted the Holy Women Myrrh Bearers when they came to anoint the Lord Jesus.

The Apostle and Evangelist Mark writes (16:5-7):

“And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: He is risen; He is not here: behold the place where they laid Him. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that He goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see Him, as He said unto you.” And, with these words the joy of this miraculous and holy event was spread to the Apostles, and to the rest of the world. So that to this day, all Christians greet each other with these same words (*Christ is Risen!*) on the feast of all feast, the Resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

These few words carry significant meaning to all of creation. They are words of faith, promise and joy. They confirm the Lord Jesus Christ is the Messiah, who fulfilled all prophecy of the Old Testament, and thereby gave us its continuation – the New Testament and His Holy Church. These are words, which confirmed and inspired the Apostles, and others to whom Christ had appeared after His Resurrection, propelling them to fulfill the Lord’s command: *“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature...”*(*Mark 16:15-16*)

The Holy Gospel records our Saviour raising three people from the dead back to life: the daughter of Jairus, who had just expired, the son of the widow of Nain, who was already being carried to his grave, and Lazarus, who was already in his tomb four days dead, after which our Saviour was greeted as the conqueror of death upon His entry into Jerusalem. The people *“when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet Him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord. (John 12:12-13)”* Yet, soon thereafter, this same “chorus,” swayed by the jealousy and vengeance of the chief priests, pharisees and sadducees, demanded: *“Let Him be crucified.” (Matthew 27:22)* and, *“His blood be on us, and on our children.” (Matthew 27:25)* Again, the prophesies were fulfilled.

What dreadful and horrifying words were pronounced against the awaited Messiah, innocent in every way. Even Pilate (not a Jew) said *“to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man.” (Luke 23:4)* Nonetheless, even on the Cross, our all-merciful Saviour showing his love for mankind said, *“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” (Luke 23:34)*

And indeed, forgiveness was poured forth through Christ’s own Resurrection. Orthodox Christians now have the promise of our resurrection, the restoration of our fallen nature, the forgiveness of sins, and all the Sacraments of the Church for our salvation where we may become one in Christ. By declaring: “Christ is Risen,” we declare our Faith, the Faith of the Old Testament prophets, and the Faith of the Apostles. *“Christ is Risen from the dead. Trampling down death by death, and to those in the grave bestowing life!”*

Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!

+Victor

Bishop of Boston and the Americas

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