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Athens, April 2/15, 2024

Protocol no. 3323

RESURRECTIONAL (PASCHAL) MESSAGE FOR 2024

“[Vouchsafe us] to come with pure hearts to Thy glorious and Holy Resurrection, the mystical Pascha whereby Adam hath returned to Paradise.”

(Sticheron at Vespers on Thursday of the Third Week of Lent)

Beloved Fathers and Brethren in the Risen Lord:

We have come yet again to Holy Pascha, to the indescribable and inexpressible joy over the victory of Life over death. We have tasted yet again through the Mysteries the Heavenly Kingdom of our Tri-Hypostatic God; we have enjoyed the divine glory and beauty of the glorious Body of the Church of Christ, which is the new Paradise. We exult in the spiritual freedom which our Redeemer and Savior abundantly bestows on us in His boundless goodness.

In historical terms, Pascha was the passage of the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the land of Canaan. In spiritual terms, however, according to St. Gregory the Theologian, Holy Pascha is for the Christian people the passage from things below to things on high, from earthly things to heavenly things, from death to Life (see his oration [45] on Holy Pascha).

The Apostle Paul assures us that “Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us” (I Corinthians 5:7). Our own Christian, mystical Pascha is the change from inner slavery to inner freedom, from sin to virtue, from fear to fearlessness, from earth to Heaven, from spiritual death to eternal life, from the captivity of the Devil to the liberty of the children of God.

Our Risen Lord Jesus Christ has now opened to us the path of salvation, being Himself the “Way” (St. John 14:6) and the “Door” (St. John 10:9) to eternal life. Already in Christ we pass spiritually in our souls from the darkness of sin to the Light of Grace. As long as we walk with our Lord, the God-Man, His Light guides our steps, so that we do not stumble (St. John 11:9-10) at every impediment that exalts itself to hide from us the knowledge of Christ (II Corinthians 10:5).

St. Symeon the New Theologian reminds us that withdrawal from sin marks an entrance, as it were into a tomb, into humility and repentance. But there it is that Christ finds us. And then it is that He raises us up to a mystical resurrection even during this life, something which constitutes participation in His Divine Glory (see *Catechesis* 13).

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Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

The entire period of struggle during Great Lent was precisely our spiritual journey and sacrifice, to the end that we might attain to Holy Pascha in a fitting manner. The divine and Paschal sense of meeting and union with our suffering and Risen Redeemer is achieved according to the measure of our Lenten preparation. It is only when purified in their senses that people can rejoice in and experience the Light of the Resurrection. The purity that is required comes through bodily fasting, spiritual self-control, and tears of repentance in the soul, in keeping with the unerring therapeutic tradition and experience of Orthodoxy.

If we are to become radiant in the eyes of God and worthy of the divine splendor of Pascha, we must cast off from upon ourselves and from within ourselves the “garment of self-indulgence,” that is, captivity to the passions, and be clothed in “the bright raiment of abstinence” (Matins on Tuesday of the Third Week of Lent, Ode 2 of the first Canon), for only in this state do we have true communion with Christ the Savior.

And now that the joy and respite of Pascha has come, the season of the *Pentecostarion* with the consolation that it affords and the abundance of the foods that it permits, let us not forget or forfeit the sole means of closeness and abundance with God: self-control, a pure heart, a bright and prayerful mind, and the good deeds of true faith, repentance, and virtue.

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Beloved children in the Lord:

May our Christian calling and life remain ever resurrectional, life-bearing, and true, until our Risen Lord receives us too into the eternal blessedness of the repose which rightly awaits those “who have died in the Lord” (Revelation 14:13)!

Christ is Risen! Indeed, He is Risen!

The Archbishop

† KALLINIKOS of Athens

The Members

- † 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
- † KYPRIANOS of Oropos and Phyle
- † KLEMES of Larisa and Platamon
- † AMBROSE of Methone
- † AUXENTIOS of Etna and Portland
- † THEODOSIOS of Bresthena
- † CHRISTODOULOS of Theoupolis
- † MAXIMUS of Pelagonia

Assistant Bishops

- † DANIEL of Nikopolis (Jakarta)
- † KALLINIKOS of Talantion
- † BENEDICT of Astoria

[signed and sealed as a BONA FIDE COPY]

The First Secretary of the Holy Synod
† Photios of Demetrias