

BRIGHT THURSDAY

April 23, 2020 • Fifth day of Paschaltide



CHRIST IS RISEN!

Canticle

We celebrate the death of Death, the destruction of Hades, and the beginning of the new eternal life. And as we leap with joy, we hymn the cause with praise: The only blessed and most glorified, the God of our fathers.

*Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down Death by death,
and upon those in the tombs bestowing life.*



AT MORNING PRAYER

from the Pentecostarion, at Orthros

O Lord, when the grave had been sealed by the lawless, Thou camest forth from the tomb even as Thou wast born of the Theotokos. Thine incorporeal Angels knew not how Thou wast incarnate; the soldiers who guarded Thee did not perceive when Thou didst arise: for both these things are sealed fast against the inquisitive, but the wonders are made manifest unto those who worship the mystery with faith. Do Thou grant unto us who praise it exceeding joy and great mercy.

Glory to Thy holy Resurrection, O Lord.

O Lord, having destroyed the everlasting bars and burst the bonds asunder, Thou didst arise from the tomb, leaving behind Thy funeral shrouds as a witness to the truth of Thy three-day burial. And Thou wentest on before into Galilee, O Thou Who wast guarded in the cave. Great is Thy mercy, O incomprehensible Saviour. Have mercy on us.

Glory to Thy holy Resurrection, O Lord.

O Lord, even as Thou camest forth while the tomb was sealed, so also didst Thou enter unto Thy disciples while the doors were shut, showing unto them the sufferings of Thy body, which Thou didst accept, O Saviour, since Thou art long-suffering. As one of the seed of David, Thou didst endure wounds; but as the Son of God, Thou didst free the world. Great is Thy mercy, O incomprehensible Saviour. Have mercy on us.

AT EVENING PRAYER

from the Pentecostarion, at Vespers

Having the victory over Hades, O Christ, Thou didst ascend the Cross, that with Thyself Thou mightest raise them that sat in the darkness of Death, O Thou Who art free among the dead. Thou Who dost pour forth life from Thine own light, O omnipotent Saviour, have mercy on us.

Glory to Thy holy Resurrection, O Lord.

Having trampled on Death, Christ is risen today, as He said, and hath granted joy unto the world; that while crying out, we all may thus chant the hymn: O Well-spring of life, O Unapproachable Light, O omnipotent Saviour, have mercy on us.

Glory to Thy holy Resurrection, O Lord.

Who shall not magnify thee, most holy Virgin? Who shall not praise thy birth-giving, free of travailing and pain? For the only Son rising timelessly from the Father, Himself did become incarnate from thee in an inexplicable way. He, Who while God by nature, became for our sakes Man by nature, not divided into two persons, but known by two natures without mixture or confusion. To Him, O noble and most blessed one, plead for the salvation of our souls.



WISDOM OF THE HOLY FATHERS

LEO THE GREAT

Pope of Rome

†461

~ from a Paschal homily of his ~

BRETHREN, we must strive to be found partakers of Christ's Resurrection, and *pass from death to life (1 John 3:14)* while we are in this body. For when a man is changed from one thing into another, no longer being what he was is, to him, an ending; and to be what he was not is a beginning. We must die, therefore, to the devil and live to God; we must perish to iniquity that we may rise to righteousness. Let the old sink, that the new may rise; and since, as the Truth says, *no one can serve two masters, (Matthew 6:24)* let not him be lord who has caused the overthrow of those that stood, but Him Who has raised the fallen to victory.

Accordingly, since the Apostle says *the first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven; as was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly, (1 Corinthians 15:47-48)* we must greatly rejoice over this change, whereby we are translated from earthly degradation to heavenly dignity through His unspeakable mercy, Who descended into our estate that He might promote us to His estate, by assuming not only the substance but also the conditions of sinful nature, and by allowing the impassibility of the Godhead to be affected by all the miseries which are the lot of mortal manhood.

And then there followed many proofs, whereon the authority of the Faith to be preached through the whole world might be based. And although the rolling away of the stone, the empty tomb, the arrangement of the linen cloths, and the Angels who narrated the whole deed by themselves fully established the truth of the Lord's Resurrection, yet did He often appear plainly to the eyes both of the women and of the Apostles, not only talking with them, but also remaining and eating with them, and allowing Himself to be handled by the eager and curious hands of those assailed by doubt. For to this end He entered, when the doors were closed, upon the disciples and gave them the Holy Spirit by breathing on them, and after giving them the light of understanding opened the secrets of the Holy Scriptures, and again showed them the wound in the side, the prints of the nails, and all the marks of His most recent Passion, whereby it might be acknowledged that in Him the properties of the divine and human Nature remained undivided, and we might in such a way know that the Word was not what the flesh is, so as to confess God's only Son to be both Word and Flesh.

The Apostle Paul, dearly beloved, does not disagree with this belief, when he says: *even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. (2 Corinthians 5:16b)* For the Lord's Resurrection was not the ending, but the changing of the flesh, and His substance was not destroyed by His increase of power. The quality was altered, but the nature did not cease to exist: the body, which had been possible to crucify, was made impassible; it was made incorruptible, though it had been possible to wound it. And properly is Christ's flesh said not to be known in that state in which it had previously been known, because nothing remained passible in it, nothing weak, so that it was the same in essence and not the same in glory. St. Paul maintains this about Christ's body when he says of all spiritual Christians: *therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. (2 Corinthians 5:16a)* Henceforth, we begin to experience the Resurrection in Christ, since that time when, through Him Who died for all, all our hopes were guaranteed to us. We do not hesitate in timidity, we are not under the suspense of uncertainty; but having received a token of the promise, we now with the eye of faith see the things which will be; and rejoicing in the uplifting of our nature, we already possess what we believe.

Let us not then be taken up with temporal matters, neither let our contemplations be diverted from heavenly to earthly things. For although *by hope we were saved* and still bear about with us a flesh that is corruptible and mortal, yet we are rightly said not to be in the flesh, if the fleshly affections do not dominate us. And so, when the Apostle says *make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts, (Romans 13:14)* we understand that those things which contribute to health and which human weakness demands are not forbidden us, but because we ought not satisfy all our desires nor indulge in all that the flesh lusts after, we recognize that we are warned to exercise such self-restraint as not to permit what is excessive, nor refuse what is necessary, to the flesh which is placed under the mind's control.

Let God's people, then, recognize that they are a new creation in Christ, and with all vigilance understand by Whom they have been adopted and Whom they have adopted. Let not the things which have been made new return to their ancient instability; and let not him who has *put his hand to the plough* forsake his work, but rather attend to that which he sows rather than look back to that which he has left behind. Let no one fall back into that from which he has risen, but, even though from bodily weakness he still languishes under certain maladies, let him urgently desire to be healed and raised up. For this is the path of health through imitation of the Resurrection begun in Christ, whereby, notwithstanding the many accidents and falls to which in this slippery life the traveler is liable, his feet may be guided from the quagmire on to solid ground, for, as it is written, *the steps of a man are rightly directed by the Lord, and His way shall be greatly desire. When he falleth, he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth his hand. (Psalm 36:23-24)* These thoughts, dearly beloved, must be kept in mind not only for the Paschal festival, but also for the sanctification of the whole life, and to this our present exercise ought to be directed, that what has delighted the souls of the faithful by the experience of a short observance may pass into a habit and remain unalterably; and if any fault creep in, it may be destroyed by speedy repentance. And because the cure of long-standing diseases is slow and difficult, remedies should be applied early, when the wounds are fresh, so that rising ever anew from all downfalls, we may deserve to attain to the incurruptible resurrection of our glorified flesh in Christ Jesus our Lord, Who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. *Amen.*

