

GREAT & HOLY PASCHA

April 19, 2020

CHRIST IS RISEN!

AL-MASEEH QAM!

CHRISTOS ANESTI!

CHRISTOS VOSKRESE!



This is the day of Resurrection, let us be radiant, O people: Pascha, the Lord's Pascha. For Christ our God hath passed us from death to life and from earth to heaven, we who sing the song of victory.

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

ATHANASIUS OF ALEXANDRIA

Archbishop

†373

~ from a Paschal epistle of his ~

BRETHREN, how fine a thing it is to move from festival to festival, from prayer to prayer, from holy day to holy day. The time is now at hand when we enter on a new beginning: the proclamation of the blessed Pascha, in which the Lord was sacrificed. We feed as on the food of life, we constantly refresh our souls with His precious blood, as from a fountain. Yet we are always thirsting, burning to be satisfied. But He Himself is present for those who thirst and, in His goodness, invites them to the feast day. Our Savior repeats His words: *If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. (John 7:37)*

He quenched the thirst not only of those who came to Him then. Whenever anyone seeks Him, he is freely admitted to the presence of the Savior. The grace of the feast is not restricted to one occasion. Its rays of glory never set. It is always at hand to enlighten the mind of those who desire it. Its power is always there for those whose minds have been enlightened and who meditate day and night on the holy Scriptures, like the one who is called blessed in the holy psalm: *Blessed is the man who has not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, and has not stood in the way of sinners, and has not sat in the seat of evil men. But his pleasure is in the law of the Lord; and in His law will he meditate day and night. (Psalm 1:1-2)*

Moreover, my friends, the God Who first established this feast for us allows us to celebrate it each year. He Who gave up His Son to death for our salvation, from the same motive gives us this feast, which is commemorated every year.

This feast guides us through the trials that meet us in this world. God now gives us the joy of salvation that shines out from this feast, as He brings us together to form one assembly, uniting us all in spirit in every place, allowing us to pray together and to offer common thanksgiving, as is our duty on the feast. Such is the wonder of His love: He gathers to this feast those who are far apart, and brings together in unity of faith those who may be physically separated from each other. *Amen.*



MELITO OF SARDIS

Bishop

c.180

~ from his homily, 'On the Pascha' ~

WE SHOULD UNDERSTAND, beloved, that the Paschal mystery is at once old and new, transitory and eternal, corruptible and incorruptible, mortal and immortal. Insofar as it concerns the Law it is old, but it is new insofar as it concerns the Gospel. In its figure it is passing, in its grace it is eternal. It is corruptible in the sacrifice of the lamb, incorruptible in the eternal life of the Lord. It is mortal in His burial in the earth, immortal in His Resurrection from the dead.

The Law indeed is old, but the Gospel is new. The type is transitory, but grace is eternal. The lamb was corruptible, but the Lord is incorruptible. He was slain as a lamb; but He was resurrected as God. *He was led like a sheep to the slaughter*, yet He was not a sheep. He was silent as a lamb, yet he was not a lamb. The type has passed away; the reality has come. The lamb gives place to God, the sheep gives place to a man, and the man is Christ, Who fills the whole of creation. The sacrifice of the lamb, the celebration of the Passover, and the prescriptions of the Law have all been fulfilled in Jesus Christ, for whose sake everything happened in the ancient Law, and even more so in the new Gospel.

Both the Law and the Gospel came forth from Sion and Jerusalem, but now the Law has given place to the Word: the old to the new. The commandment has become grace, the type a reality. The lamb has become a Son, the sheep a man, and man, God.

The Lord, though He was God, became man. He suffered for the sake of those who suffer, He was bound for those in bonds, condemned for the guilty, buried for those who lie in the grave; but He rose from the dead, and cried aloud: 'Who will contend with Me? Let him confront Me. I have freed the condemned, brought the dead back to life, raised men from their graves. Who has anything to say against Me? I,' He said, 'am the Christ; I have destroyed Death, triumphed over the enemy, trampled hell underfoot, bound the strong one, and taken men up to the heights of heaven: I am the Christ. Come, then, all you nations of men, receive forgiveness for the sins that defile you. I am your forgiveness. I am the Passover that brings salvation. I am the Lamb Who was immolated for you. I am your ransom, your life, your resurrection, your light, I am your salvation and your king. I will bring you to the heights of heaven. With My own right hand I will raise you up, and I will show you the eternal Father.

He is the One Who made the heavens and the earth, and Who in the beginning created man, Who was proclaimed through the Law and Prophets, Who became human through the Virgin, Who was hanged upon a tree, Who was buried in the earth, Who was resurrected from the dead, and Who ascended to the heights of heaven, Who sits at the right hand of the Father, Who has authority to judge and to save everything, through Whom the Father created everything from the beginning of the world to the end of the age.

He is the Alpha and the Omega. He is the beginning and the end—an indescribable beginning and an incomprehensible end. This is the Christ. This is the king. This is Jesus. This is the General. This is the Lord. This is the One Who rose up from the dead. This is the One who sits at the right hand of the Father. He bears the Father and is borne by the Father, to Whom be the glory and the power forever. *Amen.*

