

AN ADDRESS TO THE HEAD OF CHURCHES ON THEIR VISIT TO THE PATRIARCHATE IN CELEBRATION OF EASTER.

Now Has dawned that day most renowned and most holy, The first of Sabbaths, Hailed as queen and sovereign. Fairest Feast feasts And most joyous celebration of all celebrations, When we tell how blessed is Christ unto all ages. (katavasia of Pascha Ode 8).

Your Beatitudes,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Reverend Fathers,

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Christ is Risen! He Is risen Indeed!

We greet you in the joy of Easter, this day most renowned and holy! Indeed this day is most renowned and holy, for on this Feast of feasts God has brought us over from slavery to freedom, from darkness to light, from despair to hope, from death to life. For Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and giving life to those in the tomb.

This is the day most renowned and holy for us, for this day shines as beacon of hope.

We know that the experience of the cross is common to all humanity. Everyone carries crosses of many kinds, and these crosses are the manifestations of difficulty, uncertainty, and

fear.

But we proclaim the life-giving cross of Christ, the cross of the risen Christ, which brings life to the world. For this reason Good Friday and Holy Saturday are Inseparable for us: In the cross of the risen Christ we see the deeper meaning of the resurrection.

In speaking of Good Friday and Holy Saturday, the Church Fathers speak of *harmolypy*, which encompasses both “sadness and “joy” in equal measure. It signifies sadness, because for a moment on Good Friday we see our human life in the face of abandonment by God. We have a fleeting sense of the absence of God. But our joy is the realization that we are not, in fact, abandoned, and we cannot live without God’s presence.

Our mission as the Church of Christ is to be a living witness to the redemptive work of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the saving power of resurrection, by and through which Christ has made us members of his Kingdom.

Our mission is to spread the message of this day most renowned and holy to the whole world to those who do not yet know Christ and who have not yet heard the Good News.

The world continues to experience darkness, despair, uncertainty and difficulty. This is no more evident than In our own region. But we must not fear. On the contrary this Feast of feasts gives us the confidence to bear witness to the universal significance of Christ for us and for the whole world.

Our chief duty is to keep the Holy Place of this Holy Land to be what they have always been – sources of strength and encouragement to all, both members of the local Christian community and the many thousands of pilgrims from other lands who come to them, so that they may continue their lives in hope and strength, and help In building a new future for the human family of peace, justice, mutual respect, and true co-

existence.

For we are not the masters of history. We serve the Master of history, who in truth is the *eschaton*, the fulfillment and completion of all things. May this Easter Feast enlighten our minds and warm our hearts in strengthening our commitment to our mission and moral obligation.

Christ is risen! He Is risen indeed! Thank you.

His Beatitude Theophilos III

Patriarch of Jerusalem