

EASTER MESSAGE OF HIS BEATITUDE PATRIARCH THEOPHILOS OF JERUSALEM

THEOPHILOS III

By God's Mercy Patriarch of the Holy City of Jerusalem

and all Palestine,

to the entire flock of the Church

in grace and mercy and peace from the All-holy and Life-giving
Sepulcher

of the Resurrected Christ.

"Christ rose from the dead,

the commencement of the departed, the First-Born

of creation and Creator of all events

renovating in Him the cleansed nature of our genus.

Death, you shall no longer prevail. Because the Master of all

has overpowered your dominion".

(Sunday of third echos, of Invocation)

Immersed in brilliance and praising God, the Church today celebrates the glorious Resurrection of the Lord. It celebrates the fact that the Monogenes Son and Logos of God, Jesus Christ, our Incarnate Lord, who walked on earth,

associated with humans and benefited them, He who offered Himself to His God and Father to be sacrificed by crucifixion for our sins, and was buried in this "new" tomb, *"where no one had ever been laid"* (John 19, 41) has risen from the dead.

Truly, Christ has risen. Hades and death had no authority over Him. They had not been able to detain Him. Hades thought he had received a mortal intended to be swallowed, and instead he met a God and human, he met a Theanthropos, a God-man, the Son of God and the Son of the Virgin. Hades was deceived and embittered, as God the Father brought His Incarnate Son back from the dead. Jesus Christ broke the shackles of Hades, was resurrected and rose over the earth, carrying within Him His incarnate human nature, making Adam and his whole race alive.

The Resurrected Lord robbed Hades of the dead. The descent of the Saviour into Hades had been foretold in divine economy by the decapitated John the Baptist. Christ liberated the prisoners of Hades. The darkness of Hades' torture and pain He transformed into light, joy and abundance of Paradise. Those were the first He received into His Kingdom after the thief he had pronounced a citizen of Heaven. *"Christ stood before those in Hades and called to them, come back to Paradise"*.

In this mystery as in other mysteries of the Bible, God had called on His Angels as accomplices. An Angel had removed the stone that sealed the Tomb. An Angel proclaimed this unprecedented mystery to the Myrophorae who thought He was dead and *"came to anoint Him with spices"* (Mark 16, 1). Having received word of this, His disciples *"saw the empty sepulcher and the linen clothes lie, and the napkin that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes but in a place by itself"* (John 20, 7).

Upon looking at the empty sepulcher, in spite of the angelic vision and the news of the resurrection, sorrow, terror, wonder and ecstasy conquered their souls, *"for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead"*

(John 20, 9). Their sorrow suddenly turned to joy, when *“the Lord said to them “Greetings”* (Matthew 28, 8); and when they were together *“with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!”* (John 20, 19); when *“He walked with Luke and Cleopas and blessed their bread”* (Luke 28, 8); and when *“After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days”* (Acts 1, 3).

When He finished *“the work given to Him by His father to do”* (John 17, 4), the crucified and resurrected Lord ascended to Heaven, carrying with Him our human nature He had received during His Incarnation, and sat on the right of the Father and became god by grace.

From there he sent His Disciples His Holy Spirit. With the light and power of this Spirit, these twelve men went on to preach His truth across the world. They became the instruments through which Christ founded His Church in the world. He founded the Church as the beginning of His Kingdom. Church, as His body, performs on earth His salvaging work. The Church teaches, sanctifies, heals, comforts, feeds the poor, liberates the prisoners, heals the ill, pacifies, alleviates and relieves human pain, prevails over the world and death. Just like Christ *“had suffered these things to enter into His glory”* (Luke 24, 26), so will the Church *“must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God”* (Acts, 14, 22).

For this reason the persecuted Church prays for its persecutors, holds its peace when provoked, tolerates when slandered, teaches with its words, sanctifies through its sacraments and pours oil and wine into the wounds of humans; attends to their spiritual needs without neglecting the material ones. It offers the bread of life for the forgiveness of sins and the eternal life, but also provides the daily bread to those made poor and deprived by the unjust economic system of this deceiving century.

The Church of Sion performs this salvaging work of Christ on the sites of His appearance, indeed the land of His crucifixion and resurrection. These sites it guards as witness to His presence on earth. From these lands, especially the Horrendous Golgotha and the Hallowed Sepulcher wherein the Lord resurrected, we generously offer Patriarchal wishes and blessings to the entire flock in Israel, the Palestinian State, Jordan and Qatar, welcoming you, pious pilgrims surrounding the Holy Sepulcher and concelebrating with us this redeeming and brilliant night, as we supplicate for mercy, life, health, progress, wellbeing and salvation on your behalf, exclaiming the joyful salutation "Christ Has Risen!"

In the Holy City of Jerusalem **EASTER 2015**

Ardently Blesser in the Lord

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem