

MESSAGE OF H.H.BEATITUDE FOR THE FEAST OF PASCHA 2017

THEOPHILOS III

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

and all Palestine

to all members of the Church, grace and mercy and peace

from the All-Holy and Life-Giving Sepulchre

of the Resurrected Christ.

“Christ is risen from the dead,

The fristfruits of those that sleep:

The firstborn of all creation

And maker of all created things!”

(Stichoirion of Paschal Praises tone 3)

It was deep dawn on that day, the first of the Sabbaths, the first of the Week, after the crucifixion and the burial of Lord Jesus. The women surrounding Mariam, who had escorted Christ from Galilee and had become witnesses to His Cross and burial, ran in haste on that dawn, wondering to themselves who would remove the big stone at the entrance of the tomb, so that they would be able to anoint the body of the crucified and buried Lord Jesus Christ with myrrh, according to the custom of the Jews.

However, having reached the tomb, they became witnesses of a

dazzling and marvelous sight. They found the stone rolled away, while a couple of lively angels said to them "why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here but is risen" (Luke 24:6). "Behold the place where they laid him" (Mark 16:6).

This was the gospel, the good news, of the accomplished work of God for the liberty, redemption, rebirth, regeneration, resurrection and salvation of man. The Only-Begotten Son and Word of God, having received flesh from the Holy Spirit and the Ever-Virgin Mary and willingly placed this flesh upon the cross, he died as human on the cross and was buried as mortal, to be risen from the dead on the third day by the power of His Father and His own Divine power. Death did not have power over Him, he was not able to keep Him. The God-man Jesus Christ trampled down death by death. He shattered the bonds of Hades, pulverized the seals of the tomb and left it empty but with the linen clothes to witness His resurrection.

Not only this, but the Lord who was risen from the dead confirmed the angelic vision and announcement soon afterwards, by His own resurrected presence. He appeared in His immaculate body, which was crucified, pierced with nails, brightened and deified, in many appearances He made after His resurrection. He met the myrrh-bearing women in the garden outside the tomb saying to them "All hail" (Mat. 28:9). He appeared to His disciples when they were assembled in the Upper room, when the doors were shut in the evening of that day, the first of the Sabbaths, and again after eight days when Thomas was with them (John 20:19-29). He walked alongside with Luke and Cleopas towards Emmaus, where He blessed the bread and gave it to them (Luke 24:30). He stood amidst His disciples, talking to them, and while he could not be touched he encouraged them to touch Him and make sure that being Incarnate, He had "flesh and bones" and asked them and was given to eat "a piece of a broiled fish and of a honeycomb" (Luke 24:36-44). "To whom he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible

proofs" (Acts 1:3). On the fortieth day after His resurrection, while His disciples were watching, He ascended in Heaven and sat at the right hand side of His Father, with the Incarnate nature He received from us and deified it.

From Heaven, He sent to us through the Father another Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, His Holy Spirit, which enlightened His Holy disciples and apostles and founded the Church, His Holy Body. He founded and foreordained it to continue His sanctifying and salvific mission on earth; to be the manifestation of His forthcoming Kingdom to the world; to preach His Gospel all over the world; to offer remission of sins by the power it received by Him; to preach the knowledge of Him to the ignorant world; that He is the way and the truth and the life; to preach the hope of the resurrection to the desolate people; to lighten the burden of the people bringing them to Himself, who said "Come to me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Mat. 11:28); to exercise works of charity to the poor, refugees, shipwrecked and homeless, taking as an example its Founder, Who is the source of all goodness and philanthropy. By the power of His words "take, eat and drink of it all" and in the invocation of the Holy Spirit to transmit His immaculate Body and His sacred Blood for the remission of sins and life everlasting. To contrast the fury of war violence and the illogical novel terrorist destructive atrocity to His word of sacrificial love and reconciliation, "Father, forgive them" (Luke 23:34) and "I say unto you, love your enemies, and bless them that curse you" (Mat. 5:44).

The Church of Jerusalem, Holy Zion, which has been granted by its Founder His ministry and redemptive mission to the places where He appeared in flesh, and especially in His Life-giving Sepulchre, of which the Sacred Edicule was recently renovated, wishes to its Christian congregation all over the world, and to the noble pilgrims who honour it, patience to the end and fruition in patience, the strength and the hope of

resurrection as an antidote to the adversities and sorrows,
the true peace of the Resurrected Jesus Christ, health and
prosperity and a joyful resurrection paschal season,
exclaiming in unspeakable joy "Christ is Risen!"

Holy City of Jerusalem **PASCHA 2017**

With Fatherly wishes and Patriarchal blessings

Fervent suppliant for all before God

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem