

PASCHAL MESSAGE OF H.H.B. THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS III

THEOPHILOS III

By the Mercy of God Patriarch of the Holy City of Jerusalem
and all Palestine

To members of the Church, grace and mercy and peace from the
All-holy and Life-giving Tomb of the Resurrected Christ.

Christ is risen from the dead

Having destroyed the bonds of death

Earth proclaim great joy!

Heavens praise the glory of God!

(Praises of the Octoechos, tone
7)

Jesus Christ of Nazareth, Who was made incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the Ever-Virgin Mary, the Only Begotten Son and Word of God, Who was born in the flesh in Bethlehem during the reign of Caesar Augustus, was associated with the people and benefited them, preached repentance and the coming of the kingdom of God on earth, established love and even love for our enemies as a law of life, healed the sick and those suffering from incurable diseases, resurrected the dead, willingly suffered the cross by Pontius Pilate in Jerusalem, shed His immaculate blood for the remission of our sins, died

on the cross in the form of a man and was buried next to Golgotha in "a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid" (John 19:41). At His burial, when "they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard" (Mat. 27:66), "the children of the redeemed ones" saw His end.

However, God's Will for His Son and the salvation of the humankind was different. "When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body" (Mark 16:1), they found themselves in front of an unheard of and marvelous sight. They found the stone of the door moved aside and heard an angel saying to them from the tomb: "'You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him" (Mark 16:6).

This was God's philanthropic providence for man, the Resurrection of His Son. Having willingly endured suffering and death for our sake on the cross as a man, Christ was risen from the tomb as God-man. "The Messiah had to suffer these things and then enter His glory" (Luke 24:26). His glory lies in the humility of His cross. It was through His cross that joy came to the whole world. It was by Christ's cross that the homicide devil, was mightily conquered. "By death, Christ trampled down death". Death was trampled down completely, it had no power over Christ. Having entered Hades through the cross, Christ was resurrected, and along with Him, He resurrected the first created couple and their descendants, and took them into paradise with Him, to which paradise He also deemed worthy in a single day the pious thief, who theologized in repentance.

This joyful angelic announcement of the resurrection was confirmed by the Resurrected Lord Himself, through His many appearances. At first He was seen by the myrrh-bearing women, "after that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still

living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles" (1 Cor. 15:6-7) in His radiant and glorified through the cross human body, speaking to them, "showing them his hands and feet, confirming that He is not a ghost, for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as He does, taking food and eating before them" (Luke 24: 39-43), "giving them His peace and the power to forgive sins by the power the Holy Spirit, Whom He breathed in them" (John 20:21-23).

"To whom [the Apostles] also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs" (Acts 1:3); for forty days after His Resurrection, then He was ascended in heaven and sat on the right side of His Father, after he had received His incarnate nature and had also glorified our deified human nature through the cross. From heaven, as he had foretold, "when the day of Pentecost was fully come" (Acts 2:1), He sent to the Apostles another Comforter, the Spirit of truth "showing them forth as supremely wise, and through them didst draw the world into His net".

Indeed, the whole world was drawn into His net, through the inspired by the Holy Spirit preaching of the Apostles, on the person, the teaching and the redeeming work of the Incarnate, Crucified and Resurrected Jesus Christ. On the rock of the Apostles' confession, as He foretold, "did the Lord build His Church" (Mat. 16:18), and sealed and established it in the world by His Holy Spirit. Ever since, the Church as His mystical body, has been offering a peaceful, reconciliatory, taming of the human morals, sanctifying and soul-and-body-redeeming mission all over the world.

This mission of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church is also carried out by the Mother of Churches, "the first to receive the remission of sins through the Resurrection", around the places of grace, the places where our Saviour Christ lived as man, and during the night of the feast of the

Glorious Resurrection it ardently prays from the All-holy and Life-giving Tomb for the peace of the world, of the Middle East and of the Holy Land, and wishes to its congregation in the Holy Land and in every place of the earth, as well as to all those who honour it, the noble pilgrims, health, strength and every blessing coming from the Resurrected Christ.

In the Holy City of Jerusalem PASCHA 2018

With Fatherly wishes and Patriarchal blessings

Fervent Supplicant for all before God,

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

