

PATRIARCHAL PROCLAMATION
ON THE HOLY PASCHA

Protocol Number 477

+ B A R T H O L O M E W

BY THE MERCY OF GOD
ARCHBISHOP OF CONSTANTINOPLE-NEW ROME
AND ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH
TO THE PLENITUDE OF THE CHURCH
GRACE, PEACE AND MERCY
FROM OUR GLORIOUSLY RISEN SAVIOUR CHRIST

Dearly beloved Brethren and Children in the Lord,

“Behold, the winter has passed!”¹ “The spring” of salvation “has come; flowers have appeared across the land, the sound of the turtle-dove is heard, ... the vines are in bloom and give forth their fragrance.”² A sacred Pascha – Great and Holy – has risen upon us, and it warms, lights and makes radiant all the world. “Now all things are filled with light, both heaven and earth and the nethermost regions of the earth.”³

CHRIST IS RISEN!

Our God, Who is beyond all suffering and Immortal, Who is the comely Bridegroom of the Church, our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is our Firstborn Brother and Dearest Friend, *“has risen from the dead, trampling down death by death”* three days after He cried out from the height of the Cross: *“It is finished!”⁴ “Hades was embittered when it encountered Him below”⁵*, because Christ destroyed his lordship. As God, He not only rightly emptied his dark chambers, freely bestowing life on those He found in the tombs, but to all those who would believe in Him from then on until the

¹ Song of Songs 2:11

² Song of Songs 2:12-13

³ Canon of Pascha

⁴ St. John 19:30

⁵ Isaiah 14:9

consummation of the age – indeed to all those who would live in Him and hold fast to their faith and confession in Him until the end - He grants everlasting life and a sure resurrection. Christ, “*Who has girded His loins with righteousness and clothed his sides with truth,*”⁶ has risen from the tomb. “*In His love for mankind, He has raised up Adam, the father of us all.*”⁷

Behold then, dearly beloved brethren and children, the high point of our Great Feast and the atmosphere of spring in the midst of its first bloom that the Church announces as Good News to the universe. The heavy winter of death has passed away! The icy tyranny of the devil has been overcome with power. The frightening reign of darkness and destruction has been undone. “*The Lord is King, and has put on glorious apparel!*”⁸

We behold Jesus - of His own free will and out of His unconditional love - suffering on the Cross, dying and being buried for us and for our salvation. We have already worshipped Him as risen from the dead, and together with the Apostles and the Myrrh-bearing Women we have heard from His holy mouth the words: “*Peace be unto you!*”⁹ and “*Rejoice!*”¹⁰ – and our hearts are filled with joy. Indeed, “*no one will take our joy from us,*”¹¹ because even more than our own death, the personal death of every single human being has been brought to naught with power. This is why we, who have crucified the carnal mind of the old man “*together with its passions and its lusts*”¹² and who “*have died with Christ ... believe that we will also live with Him.*”¹³ For as “*we have been buried*” with Christ “*through Baptism,*”¹⁴ we have become “*united with Him,*” that is, we have become partakers of His Resurrection.¹⁵

St Gregory the Theologian trumpets this truth with great rhetorical skill when he says: “*Yesterday I was crucified with You, O Christ; today I share in your glory. Yesterday I died with You; today I am filled with life. Yesterday I was buried with You; today I rise with You.*”¹⁶ The age-old problem that has plagued us from the beginning has once and for all been resolved by the Risen Lord. Our agony is over. “*Christ is risen, and life can*

⁶ Isaiah 11:5

⁷ Service of the Resurrection

⁸ Psalm 92:1

⁹ St. John 20:20

¹⁰ St. Matthew 28:9

¹¹ Cf. St. John 16:22

¹² Galatians 5:24

¹³ Romans 6:8

¹⁴ Romans 6:4

¹⁵ Romans 6:5

¹⁶ Homily on Holy Pascha

truly be lived!”¹⁷ From now on, Life and Resurrection are not things to be sought for. They are not a utopian dream. They are a concrete, tangible reality. A reality that has a specific face and name, “*the name that is above every name*” – **Jesus Christ** – before Whom “*every knee shall bow – whether in Heaven or on earth or under the earth*”¹⁸ and every tongue shall confess that He alone is the Giver of Life and Lord, Who lives and reigns for ever. Of His own good will he apportions His Kingdom, His glory and His inheritance from His Father to all those who share in His Cross, His death and His Resurrection, since He is “*the firstborn among many brothers.*”¹⁹

From our martyric Patriarchal and Ecumenical See we beseech Him that He may grant peace to the world; that He may illumine our souls with truth and righteousness; that He may bestow patience and encouragement on those who face adversity; and may grant the taste of salvation and eternal life to all who believe.

Unto Him, Who is the Conqueror of Death and the Prince of Life, be glory, dominion, honour and worship, together with Father and the Holy Spirit, unto the ages. Amen.

Holy Pascha 2008

+ BARTHOLOMEW of Constantinople

Your fervent intercessor
before the Risen Christ

To be read in the Churches during the Divine Liturgy of the Feast of Holy Pascha,
immediately after the Holy Gospel.

¹⁷ Catechetical Homily of St. John Chrysostom

¹⁸ Philippians 2:9

¹⁹ Romans 8:29