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Athens, April 8/21, 2021

To Be Read in Church

Protocol No. 3110

RESURRECTIONAL (PASCHAL) MESSAGE FOR 2021

“It is the day of Resurrection, let us be radiant, O ye peoples; Pascha, the Lord’s Pascha; for Christ God hath brought us from death unto life, and from earth unto Heaven as we sing the triumphal hymn” (Heirmos, Ode 1 of the Paschal Canon)

Beloved Fathers and Brethren, Children in the Risen Lord:

The Holy Spirit, Who spoke through the Holy Fathers and hymnographers of the Church, summons all faithful Orthodox Christians on the resplendent Resurrection of Christ our Savior to be uplifted and exalted with radiance of both soul and body. For our Risen Lord “hath raised us up together” (Ephesians 2:6) from the depths of gloomy sin; He has restored us to life from the mortality of our transgressions; and He has caused us to pass from death to life, from darkness to light, from slavery to freedom, from enmity to reconciliation, from earth to Heaven!

This is truly an indescribable gift and inexpressible Grace; it is the exceeding greatness of Divine love, the unique love.

Our Risen Savior clearly foretold us: “And this is the will of the Father Who hath sent me, that of all which He hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day” (St. John 6:39). God the Father gives the greatest gift, that of faith in His Only-Begotten Son, to all who are of good intention and good disposition. Thus, through the breath of the Holy Spirit they obtain spiritual vivification from the Son and Logos in this life, and also bright resurrection in the next life, the true and eternal life.

At the General Resurrection all will be raised up. However, the sinners and the unenlightened, the unrepentant, will remain below as condemned. In contrast, the righteous, those who kept the Faith unto death and who were not seduced by the error and deception of pleasures and passions, those who resisted the snares of the Devil and the threats of the minions of Antichrist and of Antichrist himself, will be raised up and caught up “in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air” (I Thessalonians 4:17). They alone **will be resurrected** “unto life eternal,” “in the splendors of the Saints,” “where there is the clear voice of those who keep festival and cry unceasingly, ‘O Lord, glory to Thee!’”

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Beloved Brothers and Sisters in the Risen Lord:

We are celebrating the radiance of Life, the victory over death, under difficult and unprecedented conditions. Biological death appears to threaten everyone, without exception, and various worldly “experts and sages” are using this direct threat to sow fear and despair, and also, primarily, to implement ready-made solutions, supposedly and hopefully salutary, to confront the danger of epidemics and illnesses throughout the world for the purpose of protracting earthly life, however slightly.

Without forgoing reasonable concern even for the present life, we, the faithful of the Resurrection, should not absolutize it. **The present life is a testing-ground as to whether we are worthy to live in eternity with God or in separation from Him.** Biological death constantly besets us one way or another from the moment of our birth and is waiting at every moment to take us by surprise, “as a thief in the night” (I Thessalonians 5:2). But this happens by Divine Economy for our chastening and instruction, so that we might restrain ourselves from preferring the destructive passions that constitute the real pollution of our life and turn, as long as there is time, in repentance to the boundless mercy of our Divine Redeemer.

Let us never forget that the Providence of God does not pertain only to the things of the present life, which it truly governs and encompasses, but chiefly aims that we attain to things beyond, to the last things, to those things to which we are heading swiftly and ineluctably. It is not of primary importance **how** and **when** we shall leave the present world, but whether we are ready to behold and encounter God, for just judgment and recompense.

Let us, therefore, become ready, **free** from apostasy and sin, to walk in life with prudence and courage, as “**fearless** both by land and by sea” (St. Theodore the Studite) and by air. Let us have the Risen Jesus Christ **dwelling in us**, so that we might exclaim with boldness and assurance in every unpleasant occurrence of the present life: “I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me” (Psalm 22:4); “I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people that have set themselves against me round about” (Psalm 3:7); “Therefore shall we not fear when the earth be troubled, nor when the mountains be removed into the heart of the sea” (Psalm 45:3)!

Brethren and Fathers, **Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen!**

THE HOLY SYNOD

The Archbishop

† KALLINIKOS of Athens

The Members

- † ATHANASIOS of Larisa and Platamon
- † IOUSTINOS of Euripos and Euboea
- † GERONTIOS of Piraeus and Salamis
- † CHRYSOSTOMOS of Attica and Boeotia

† GREGORIOS of Thessalonica
† PHOTIOS of Demetrias
† MOSES of Toronto
† DEMETRIUS of America
† AMBROSIOS of Philippi and Maroneia
† CYPRIAN of Oropos and Phyle
† AMBROSE of Methone
† KLEMES of Gardikion
† AUXENTIOS of Etna and Portland
† THEODOSIOS of Bresthena
† CHRISTODOULOS of Theoupolis
† MAXIMUS of Pelagonia

[signed and sealed as a BONA FIDE COPY]

The First Secretary of the Holy Synod

† Photios of Demetrias