

RELEASE NUMBER 2013.11.1

ARCHPASTORAL LETTER FOR **The Feast of the Glorious Resurrection: Holy PASCHA** Sunday, May 5, 2013

Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen!

Dearly Beloved in our Resurrected Lord:

“We celebrate the death of death and the overthrow of hell, the beginning of another life which is eternal, and in exultation we sing the praises of its source. He alone is blessed and most glorious -- the God of our fathers.” Saint John of Damascus 7th Ode of the Canon of Resurrection Matins

As all of you know, forty years ago I suffered the greatest tragedy of my life. My wife of only 29 days was killed in an automobile accident at the age of 21. Every one of you who has ever lost someone you love to death has experienced how horrible it is. Even after forty years, there is still pain and suffering and loneliness. Everyone who suffers such a loss realizes that you never ever really get over it.

My only consolation, my only strength through that whole ordeal, my only hope enabling me to continue on, is our Paschal Faith; our firm belief in the Resurrection of Our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ. It is when I hear the voices of the faithful and join in the singing of the greatest hymn of victory of all time ~ **“Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs, bestowing life!”** ~ that I am truly able to be at peace and experience joy.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is God’s great, unspeakable gift to us out of His great love for mankind. But, the world rejected its Savior, tried to nail that Gift of Love to the Cross, and tried to bury Him in a tomb. But, the love of God is greater than the evil of the world -- mightier than the power of Satan that is behind that evil.

Christ in fact did die the humiliating death of crucifixion, reserved only for the worst of criminals, even though He had never committed a crime, never even committed a sin. He experienced, in every sense of the word, the pain and suffering that every human being knows as the onset of death takes its toll, even though He is the Son of the Living God. And, when His soul separated itself from His body at 3:00 that first Great and Holy Friday afternoon, He joined every sinner who had ever been drawn by death into Hades, that world of dark shadows under the control of Satan, even though He was the Light that had come down from Heaven. All of this -- He did for us!

On Great and Holy Friday, it seemed quite clear to anyone who had been near the Cross of Jesus that Our Lord had been defeated by His enemies. He was unjustly convicted by them, humiliated and spit upon by them, scourged and beaten by them, nailed to the Cross and left to die by them. The story of Jesus of Nazareth was seemingly ended, once and for all. But, the Love of God had yet to be heard from.

When Jesus’ soul went down to Hades, even the devil himself was convinced Our Lord was the loser and he was the victor. But, Christ broke asunder the gates of brass to the entrance of Hades, shackled Satan himself,

