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**ARCHPASTORAL LETTER FOR
The Feast of the Glorious Resurrection: Holy PASCHA**

Sunday, April 12, 2015

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.” — (Paschal Canon, Ode 7)*

On this glorious Feast of Feasts, we celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ, Who suffered the Passion and Crucifixion, Death and Burial for the salvation of the human race. By His Death He defeated sin and death and the devil, out of love for and for the sake of every man, woman and child who has ever lived and will ever live.

All humanity shares in this “triumph of triumphs.” In the words of St. Nikolai of Zhicha and South Canaan:

“Christ’s victory is the only victory in which all humanity can rejoice, from the first-created to the last. Every other victory on earth has divided, and still divides, men from one another. When an earthly king gains the victory over another earthly king, one of them rejoices and the other laments. When a man is victorious over his neighbor, there is singing under one roof and weeping under the other. There is no joyful victory on earth that is not poisoned by malice: the ordinary, earthly victor rejoices both in his laughter and in the tears of his conquered enemy. He does not even notice how evil cut through joy.

“Christ’s victory is alone like a sun that sheds bright rays on all that are beneath it. Christ’s victory alone fills all the souls of men with invincible joy. It alone is without malice or evil.”

St. Nikolai, who lived in the last century, and was a professor and the rector at St. Tikhon’s Seminary, continues:

“A mysterious victory, you will say? It is; but it is at the same time revealed to the whole human race, the living and the dead.

“A generous victory, you will say? It is, and more than generous ...

“A healing victory, you will say? It is, healing and saving for ever and ever. This gentle victory saves men from every evil and makes them sinless and immortal ...”

But today’s feast is more than a celebration of a universal victory for mankind as a whole; it is also and perhaps more importantly a celebration that touches each and every human being individually. For on the first Pascha, the Risen Savior appeared to many indeed, but to each one personally and uniquely. In one instance, it was the weeping Mary Magdalene, lonely and grieving at the empty tomb; in another, it was Peter, confused and bewildered, having returned from the garden where he had found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. Then there was Thomas, to whom Christ appeared -- casting away his every doubt and replacing it with unparalleled faith, by which he called Him: “My Lord and my God.” And among the last to whom the Lord appeared, there was Saul, the great persecutor, whom He transformed into Paul, the greatest missionary.

This continues even now, to this very day. Christ, risen invisibly, appears tangibly to each person. In the lives of each of us who have felt His touch, a meeting with the Resurrected Lord is accomplished; He comes to each person, knocking at the door of our heart, finding words for each. To those in despair and brokenness, He offers hope; to those surrounded by anger and hate, He offers love; to those weighed down by defeat and division, He offers joy; and to those facing sickness, suffering and death, He offers life. It is our task to listen, it is our task to respond to this knock at the door of our heart, for the Savior has come to save, sanctify, and transform the lives not just of the Saints of centuries past, but of each one of us.

Therefore, on this resplendent day of Holy Pascha, let each of us, returning to our homes and our everyday lives, carry in our hearts the great joy of Christ’s Resurrection, and the experience that the Lord has appeared to "me" also. He is risen for me, He speaks to me, and He remains with me, and will forever be my Lord, my Savior, and my God – the God Who loves us more than we love ourselves.

To Him be all glory, honor and worship, with His eternal Father and His all-holy, good, and life-creating Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Christ is Risen! – Indeed He is Risen!

With love in the Resurrected Savior,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

+ MICHAEL

Archbishop of New York and the
Diocese of New York and New Jersey