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Archiepiscopal Encyclical on the Great and Holy Pascha

April 24, 2022

Unto the Most Reverend and Right Reverend Hierarchs, Pious Priests and Deacons, the Monks and Nuns, Presidents and Members of Parish Councils, Honorable Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Members of Leadership 100, the Day and Afternoon Schools, Philoptochos Societies, the Youth, Greek Orthodox Organizations, and the entirety of the Christ-named Plenitude of the Holy Archdiocese of America.

My Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

*Christ descended alone to the Gates of Hades, He returned taking many spoils of His victory.
(Verse of the Synaxarion of Pascha)*

What a journey our Lord took for the sake of our salvation! What pains did He not endure? Not only did He descend from the heights of Heaven to earth through his Incarnation, but through His Death on the Cross he descended into the lowest depths of human experience. As we chant on Pascha night: Κατήλθες ἐν τοῖς κατωτάτοις τῆς γῆς – into death itself, even though He is the Author of Life.

This is how the Lord Jesus, Who is the New Adam and the First-Born of the Dead, redeems the mass of humanity. He undergoes a single human life and death; He died alone upon the Cross, forsaken and abandoned. Alone did He descend into Hades, that he might free all those imprisoned there from ages past. By His flesh, which He took from the womb of His Virgin Mother, He assumes the totality of the human race. There is no



person who is not connected to Him through His Incarnation. By living a perfect life in a willing, conscience way, He makes possible perfection for every human being through metanoia, which is as much transformation as it is repentance and turning from selfishness to God. Finally, using the Cross to bridge Heaven and earth, He descends to the lowest depths, to find us and to bring us home to Heaven.

As the Synaxarion affirms: “He returned taking many spoils of His victory.” This is why we cry out with our hearts aflame with joy, even as our candles shine brightly and dispel the gloom of night:

**Christ is risen from the dead, by death trampling down upon death,
and to those in the tombs He has granted life!**

Therefore, my beloved Christians, let us honor His journey from Heaven to earth, from earth to Hades, and back again for our salvation. Let us embrace one another with love and compassion, forgetting no one and forgiving everyone. Thus, we will rise from the lowest depths of our struggles and challenges, to the celestial heights of God’s glory and life everlasting.

Χριστὸς Ἀνέστη! Ἀληθῶς Ἀνέστη!

Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!

Ὁ Ἀμερικῆς Ἐπιτοφὸρος

† ELPIDOPHOROS
Archbishop of America



ΙΕΡΑ ΑΡΧΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΗ ΑΜΕΡΙΚΗΣ

ΑΡΧΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΙΚΗ ΕΓΚΥΚΛΙΟΣ

Αριθ. Πρωτ. 68/2022

Ἀρχιεπισκοπικὴ ἐγκύκλιος γιὰ τὴν ἅγια καὶ μεγάλη ἑορτὴ Πάσχα.

24 Ἀπριλίου 2022

Πρὸς τοὺς Σεβασμιωτάτους καὶ Θεοφιλεστάτους Ἀρχιερεῖς, τοὺς Εὐλαβεστάτους Ἱερεῖς καὶ Διακόνους, τοὺς Μοναχοὺς καὶ τὶς Μοναχές, τοὺς Προέδρους καὶ τὰ Μέλη τῶν Κοινοτικῶν Συμβουλίων, τοὺς Ἐντιμολογιωτάτους Ἄρχοντες τοῦ Οἰκουμενικοῦ Πατριαρχείου, τὰ μέλη τῆς Ἠγεσίας τῶν 100, τὰ Ἡμερήσια καὶ Ἀπογευματινὰ Σχολεῖα, τὶς Φιλοπτώχους Ἀδελφότητες, τὴ Νεολαία, τὶς Ἑλληνορθόδοξες Ὄργανώσεις καὶ ὁλόκληρο τὸ Χριστεπώνυμο πλήρωμα τῆς Ἱερᾶς Ἀρχιεπισκοπῆς Ἀμερικῆς.

Προσφιλεῖς ἀδελφοὶ καὶ ἀδελφές ἐν Χριστῷ,

«Χριστὸς κατελθὼν πρὸς πύλην ἄδου μόνος, λαβὼν ἀνήλθε πολλὰ τῆς νίκης σκῦλα.»
(Στίχοι τοῦ Συναξαρίου τοῦ Πάσχα)

Πόσο θαυμαστά εἶναι τὰ ἔργα τοῦ Κυρίου γιὰ τὴ σωτηρία μας! Δὲν ὑπάρχει πόνος ποὺ νὰ μὴν ὑπέμεινε! Ὅχι μόνο κατεδέχθη νὰ κατέλθει ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν, γενόμενος ἄνθρωπος, ἀλλὰ μὲ τὸ σταυρικό του θάνατο, κατήλθε στὰ ἔγκατα τοῦ ἄδη γευόμενος τὸ θάνατο, ὅπως ψάλλουμε κατὰ τὴ νύχτα τοῦ Πάσχα, γιὰ αὐτὸν ποὺ εἶναι ἡ πηγὴ τῆς ζωῆς: «Κατήλθες ἐν τοῖς κατωτάτοις τῆς γῆς».

Ἔτσι ὁ Κύριος μας Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς ἀπεργάζεται τὴ σωτηρία μας, ὡς ὁ νέος Ἀδάμ, γενόμενος πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν, λυτρώνοντας τὴν ἀνθρωπότητα, πεθαίνοντας ἐπάνω στὸ σταυρό, ἐγκαταλελειμμένος ἀπὸ ὅλους. Κατεβαίνει στὸν ἄδη λύνοντας τὰ δεσμὰ τῶν ἀπ' αἰῶνος κεκοιμημένων. Ἐνσαρκούμενος στὴ μήτρα τῆς Θεοτόκου θεώνει τὸ γένος τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ἐνώνοντας τὰ διεστῶτα. Ὡς τέλειος Θεὸς καὶ τέλειος ἄνθρωπος,



χαρίζει την τελειότητα σὲ ὅλους τοὺς ἀνθρώπους μέσω τῆς μετάνοιας, ἡ ὁποία μεταθέτει τὸν ἄνθρωπο ἀπὸ τὴ μοναξιά τοῦ ἐγωισμοῦ στὴ χαρὰ τῆς κοινωνίας μὲ τὸ Θεό. Τέλος, ὡς βασιλεὺς τῆς κτίσεως ἐνώνει τὸν οὐρανὸ μὲ τὴ γῆ, «κατελθὼν ἐν τοῖς κατωτάτοις» μᾶς ἔλκει ὅλους στὸν παράδεισο ποὺ εἶναι τὸ πραγματικὸ μας σπίτι.

Τὸ συναξάριο τῆς ἡμέρας τοῦ Πάσχα μᾶς διαβεβαιώνει γιὰ τὸ Χριστὸ ὅτι: «λαβὼν ἀνῆλθε πολλὰ τῆς νίκης σκῦλα», δηλαδὴ ἀναστήθηκε φέροντας μαζί του τὰ πολλὰ λάφυρα τῆς νίκης. Γιὰ αὐτὴ τὴ νίκη λοιπὸν ἄς ψάλουμε μὲ καιόμενες καρδιές ἀπὸ χαρὰ, λαμβάνοντας τὸ φῶς μὲ τὴν ἀναστάσιμη λαμπάδα μας, γιὰ νὰ λάμψει διαλύοντας τὸ σκότος τῆς νύχτας:

**Χριστὸς ἀνέστη ἐκ νεκρῶν, θανάτῳ θάνατον πατήσας,
καὶ τοῖς ἐν τοῖς μνήμασι, ζωὴν χαρισάμενος.**

Ἔτσι λοιπὸν ἀγαπητοί μου Χριστιανοί, ἄς τιμήσουμε αὐτὴ τὴν πορεία τοῦ Κυρίου μας γιὰ τὴ σωτηρία τοῦ γένους τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ἀπὸ τὸν οὐρανὸ πρὸς τὴ γῆ, ἀπὸ τὴ γῆ πρὸς τὸν ἄδη καὶ πάλι πρὸς τὸν οὐρανό. Ἄς «λαμπρυνθῶμεν τῇ πανηγύρει, καὶ ἀλλήλους περιπτυστάμενοι, συγχωρήσωμεν πάντα τῇ ἀναστάσει», ὑψούμενοι ἀπὸ τὰ βάθη τῶν παθῶν καὶ τῆς ἁμαρτίας, στὰ ὑπέρτατα ὕψη τῆς δόξης τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ τῆς αἰωνίου ζωῆς.

Χριστὸς Ἀνέστη! Ἀληθῶς Ἀνέστη!

† Ὁ Ἀμερικῆς Ἐλπιδοφόρος

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