

“For the Edification of the Church”

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■ Thoughts on the Occasion of the Seventh Anniversary of the Episcopal Consecration of Metropolitan Cyprian (October 6, 2014 [Old Style])



Witnesses and Witness of the Resurrection Vision and Duty

†*Metropolitan Cyprian
of Oropos and Phyle*

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Glory to God for all things! Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit! O Holy Trinity, glory to Thee!

On this, the First and Eighth Day of the week, the day on which the Holy Church honors and venerates the all-glorious Resurrection of our Lord, the Gospel reading was about the raising of the son of the widow of Nain.

The preaching of the Resurrection constitutes the *center* of the Gospel of salvation, the *center* of the ethos of the Gospel, and the *center* of the life of the Church.

The Church is inconceivable without the preaching and witness of the Resurrection, without Christians who have *experience of the Resurrection*, and without pious faithful who are *witnesses of the Resurrection*.

“Experience of the Resurrection,” means the experience in our lives of our personal resurrection, by means of the Resurrection of our Savior; more precisely, it means *participation in the Resurrection of our Lord*.

Bearing witness to the Resurrection, in deed and word, constitutes a ministry in the Orthodox Church, and indeed the loftiest ministry.

This ministry is carried out not only by the clergy and Shepherds, but also by each of the pious faithful: we are all called upon to be witnesses and ministers of the Resurrection of our Savior.

In Baptism, we have the Resurrection; in repentance, we have the Resurrection; in Holy Communion, we have the Resurrection; in prayer, we have the Resurrection; in love, we have the Resurrection; in compassion, we have the Resurrection; in ascetic practices, we have the Resurrection; in humility, we have the Resurrection.



Our Holy Church is the Church of the Resurrection; she is the Well-spring of the Resurrection; she is the Mother who constantly reminds us that our salvation does not end with the Cross; she reminds us that the Cross is but the beginning—our purification, which is followed by regeneration, illumination, deification, Christification, and Resurrection.

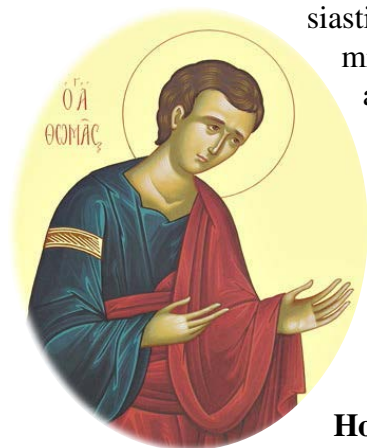
The Resurrection, the experience of the Resurrection, is the hope of the world. Hence, bearing witness to the Resurrection is deemed the highest ministry in the midst of a world that has lost the true Life, the Grace and joy of the Resurrection, and the belief that—despite its tragedies—life is worth living and has meaning, provided we give this life its very soul: the experience of the Resurrection and our participation in the Resurrection of our Lord, through our ecclesiastical life in Christ.

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Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

We placed our new ministry precisely within this perspective when, seven years ago (October 6, 2007 [Old Style]) the Church entrusted us with the pastoral work of a Bishop.

In essence, it entrusted us with the loftiest ministry: the witness of the Resurrection; that we become witnesses of the Resurrection; that we defy and overturn the culture of death; that we embody the Resurrection within the routine of everyday life; that we revive in the hearts of our flock the vision of the Resurrection; that we help them to come to an awareness that repentance is not unhealthy introversion, defeatism, and depression, but rather resurrectional, creative, productive, and self-sacrificial; to help them discover the resurrectional dimension of eccle-



siastical life in Christ, which is cultivated in the midst of light, hope, compassion, tenderness, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

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Very soon after embarking on our pastoral ministry, we came to apprehend the *main components* of our resurrectional witness, the adoption of which would give inspiration and vision to our small flock.

The first component pertains to the **Holy Spirit**. It is not possible to guide our faithful to the *acquisition of the Holy Spirit*, which resurrects our existence, if we, the Shepherds, do not ourselves have the experience of the Holy Spirit, and if the Divine Comforter does not illuminate our being: our feelings, thoughts, words, and actions.

The second involves the **Cross**. Without having themselves *taken up their Cross*, in a spirit of self-sacrifice, *to follow Christ*, it is not possible for Shepherds to persuade the faithful to “crucify themselves” in various ways, as an essential precondition for their personal resurrection.

The third has to do with the injunction “**be not conformed to this world...**” If Shepherds adopt a worldly mind-set and ethos, dominated by ambition, avarice, self-love, love of pleasure, and compromise, they have lost the vision of the Resurrection; it is, then, impossible for them to persuade “armchair” Christians to discommode themselves and radically to reject every conformation with the elements of this age of deception.

The fourth concerns the exhortation “**be ye merciful...**” When Shepherds forget that, first and foremost, they are Ministers of the Mystery of Divine Compassion, how can they possibly imitate the Good Shepherd? How can they be resurrected and resurrect others? How can they help the faithful to cast off their hardness of heart and callousness? How will they inspire them to be compassionate, accommodating, forgiving, forbearing, noble, affectionate and tender, empathetic, meek and humble, and patient with other people’s failings?

The fifth is that of **service**. It is when Shepherds dedicate themselves to the service of their flock that they enter by stages into the Upper Chamber of the Mystical Supper, so as to perform the mystery of the washing of the feet of the People of God. Serving one’s brother—

girding oneself with the towel of servitude—is not belittling, but even sublime: it ushers you into the mystery and the witness of the Resurrection. Service, when performed with the genuine ethos of the Gospel, abolishes every feeling of domination and of suppressing or restricting the freedom of the faithful. It cultivates the resurrectional freedom of the children of God, the development of talents, and the openness and receptivity of their souls to the Light of the Resurrection, in the integration of their personhood.

The sixth, with which I will complete my description of the main components of our resurrectional witness, is **Christocentric**. There has been a clear and unhealthy tendency among a portion of the faithful to make their Shepherds a touchstone and center of attention rather than Christ our Savior. This unhealthy tendency consciously or unconsciously leads to the development of a cult of personality, which is a deadly sin. The danger is bidirectional, since the loss of the vision of the Resurrection leads to the shifting of the center from the God-Man to man, and ultimately to the idolization of the spiritual Father or Shepherd, with catastrophic consequences.

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Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

The happy coincidence that today’s Gospel reading about the resurrection of the son of the widow of Nain falls on the seventh anniversary of our resurrectional ministry afforded us the opportunity to speak with a certain conciseness about the lofty ministry of all of the members of the Church: the witness of the Resurrection in deed and word.

We have been called, through our Baptism, Chrismation, and partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ, to be witnesses and ministers of the Resurrection of our Savior.

Journeying together, the Shepherds and the sheep—the Ministers and those to whom they minister—towards the Heavenly Kingdom, with our eyes on the Risen Christ, let us become aware of our paramount duty to the world: the witness of the Resurrection.

Faced with a humanism of western provenance—which *makes man autonomous*; regards him as nothing more than a *sexual animal* or an *animal that makes tools*; preaches *nihilism*; promotes the *paganism of fascism and Nazism*; speaks about the “*death of God*”; and cultivates not the ideal of deification, but rather the dehumanization of man—we are called upon to bear witness to the Resurrection, to become witnesses of the Resurrection, and to incarnate the Resurrection as a way of life.

Special heedfulness is required, however, of both the Shepherds and the flock, the spiritual Fathers and their spiritual children.

May the spiritual Fathers, on the one hand, help their children with genuine benevolence. As for the children, may they support their spiritual Fathers with genuine filial respect, avoiding the two extremes of *personality cultism* and *disdain*.

Thus, with a reciprocal interaction of personalities and mutual assistance, amidst the Light of the Resurrection, we will constitute, however unworthily, the hope of the world, the soul of the world, and the embrace of the world, which will give warmth, solace, and vision to the “great wound” that is man.

May the Grace of Jesus Christ our Savior, the love of God our Father, and the Communion of the Holy Spirit inundate our hearts and rekindle our vision: **the vision of the Resurrection. Amen!**

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TO GOD
BE GLORY AND THANKSGIVING!

