



Church of the **G**enuine **O**rthodox **C**hristians of **G**reece
The **H**oly **S**ynod

Protocol no. 2822

To be read in Church on the
Feast of the Nativity

Paschal Message for 2019

*“Come, receive ye light from the unwaning Light,
and glorify Christ, Who is arisen from the dead.”*

Beloved Fathers and Brothers, children in the Risen Lord:

On this radiant and glorious Feast of Feasts and Festival of Festivals, the Vanquisher of death, our Lord Jesus Christ, grants us the unwaning light of the Resurrection and Life. He joyously calls upon us, in His Holy Church, not to lose heart, not to remain in the frigid darkness of the passions and of sin, but rather to light our candles from the tangible light that emanates from His All-Holy Sepulcher; and, first and foremost, to receive illumination in our souls by heartfelt participation in His triumphant Resurrection. He invites us, in other words, to allow the effusion of light that has filled all things in Heaven, on earth, and beneath the earth to illumine us also, internally, with the Light of the Resurrection:

“Now are all things filled with light; Heaven and earth, and the nethermost regions of the earth,” as the divine hymnographer exultantly affirms. For Christ our resurrected Savior filled even gloomy Hades with His divine and eternal Light by His descent thereto!

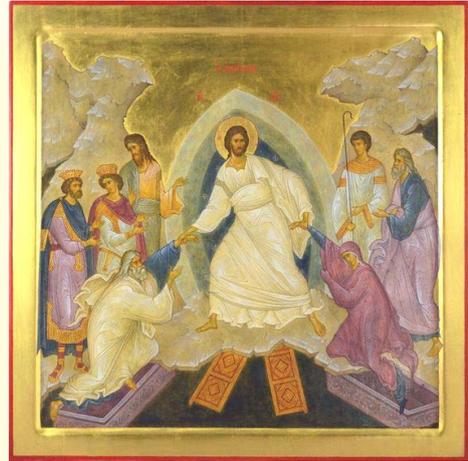
Why so? Because previously, on account of sin, man was engulfed in darkness, evil predominated everywhere, and we were given over to the slavery of death, whilst our enemy the devil, the “murderer” (St. John 8:44), retained power and prided himself on having deceived us.

Christ our Savior, however, the True Light, delivered us by His sinless death on the Cross from this ignominious slavery and intolerable condition. In His infinite love for man and ineffable love, He voluntarily assumed death, in order to descend into the kingdom of Hades and to encounter the fettered souls of those dead from ages past. And there He put Hades to death by the lightning of His Divinity, abolished the dominion of death and of sin, crushed our implacable

enemy, and, as the New Adam, brought freedom and redemption.

Our All-good Lord endured everything, as St. Gregory the Theologian emphasizes, “*so as to resurrect the flesh, safeguard the salvation of His image, and regenerate man*” (Homily VII).

For this reason, the Holy Apostle Paul, answering for himself to the Jews and the Gentiles, asks: “*Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?*” (Acts 26:8). The Resurrection was for the Apostle a most tangible certitude and reality, for he himself, as Saul the persecutor, had converted to the faith when he was illumined by a light from heaven that was brighter than the sun, and heard the Resurrected Jesus reproaching him for having persecuted Him, but also calling him to arise in order to undertake the greatest and most glorious mission: “*to open the eyes [of the Gentiles], and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith in Me [Jesus]*” (Acts 26:18).



Faith in the light-bearing Resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord liberates and illuminates man; contrarily, unbelief and subsequent sin enslave and darken man.

Only those who persist in the “*wicked works*” (Colossians. 1:21) of unbelief and error are overtaken by darkness and are alienated from God, such that they come to regard sin as a natural necessity, a goal and a way of life, and they are led to its justification, agnosticism, and atheism.

We must, however, stress that even the faithful who have fallen into seemingly small sins, but who are enamored of them and justify them, become, according to St. Basil the Great, as ones “*rejoicing in darkness,*” deprived of Light and Eternal Life!

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Children in the Risen Lord,

In the Church of Christ, by the Orthodox faith and good works, we become “*fellow citizens with the Saints and of the household of God*” (Ephesians 2:19), we receive a life that is lofty, spiritual, and charismatic, and we become “*light in the Lord...children of light*” (Ephesians 5:8), and children of the Resurrection (cf. Luke 20:38).

This gift will be granted to us until the end and will render us worthy of divine and eternal good things, by our participation in the Passion of Christ, that

we might also participate in the Resurrection and deification, in keeping with the yearning for Christ of St. Gregory the Theologian: *“I must enter the tomb with Christ, be resurrected with Christ, and become a joint heir with Christ, a son of God, a god myself.”*

Thus, the problems and difficulties we encounter in our lives should not daunt or discourage us. We should not be afraid to work with self-abnegation to acquire the virtues. Rather, we should give ourselves over with a holy longing and God-pleasing zeal to Christ our Savior, Who suffered and arose for us, by means of prayer, love, abstinence, hope, meekness, forgiveness, mercy, patience, and, above all, by our participation, with repentance, in the Immaculate Mysteries. We must do so without in any way falling into sluggishness or spiritual negligence, imagining ourselves to be successful, accomplished, and perfect, with arrogance and boasting. For we are all debtors, *“unprofitable servants,”* and have only *“done that which was our duty to do”* (St. Luke 17:10). Before us there constantly open up bright horizons and sublime summits of perfection, which call us *“to the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 3:14).

May the radiant celebration of Holy Pascha on earth be for us a foretaste of the ineffable divine Glory and illumination of the eternal Pascha in the Heavens. **A**men!

Christ is Risen!

With paternal best wishes and the blessing of
† Archbishop Kallinikos of Athens
and the Members of the Holy Synod