



Church of the **G**enuine **O**rthodox **C**hristians of **G**reece
Holy Synod

To be read in Church

Protocol No. 3497

RESURRECTIONAL (PASCHAL) MESSAGE FOR 2026

*“Thou didst descend into the lowest parts of the earth,
and didst shatter the everlasting bars
which held the fettered, O Christ; and on the third day,
like Jonas from the whale, Thou didst
arise from the tomb.”*

(Heirmos of Ode 6 of the Canon of Holy Pascha)

Beloved Fathers and Brethren in the Risen Lord:

When our Lord Jesus Christ was asked for “a sign from heaven” (St. Matthew 16:1), in order that the hypocritical Pharisees and Sadducees might tempt Him, He answered them—and all the impious of every age who resemble them—that the sign which would be given would be “the sign of Jonas the Prophet” (St. Matthew 16:4).

Just as he remained unharmed in the belly of the whale for three days and then came forth, so also the Lord, after being crucified and breathing His last according to His human nature, would remain for three days in the belly of the great whale of death, and thereafter would rise again. Saint Gregory Palamas writes tellingly: “The Pre-Eternal Word of God Himself, of Whom Jonas was a type, descended from the heavens to the earth, as Jonas went down to Joppa. And having been delivered over to temptations and sufferings, as Jonas was to the waves, He descended through death to the nethermost parts of the earth, having been swallowed by Hades, as Jonas by the whale. And having risen thence in



three days, He promised the heavenly Kingdom to those who repent and made clear and proclaimed to all the works of repentance” (Homily 39, “Delivered at a Supplicatory Procession,” §11, *Ἑλληνας Πατέρες τῆς Ἐκκλησίας*, Vol. X, p. 506).

The Resurrection of the Lord was, is, and ever shall be the greatest sign, the most prodigious miracle in the history of this world; for it is the mighty victory over dreadful death and the triumph and inauguration of unending life and immortality!

* * *

Beloved Brethren:

What people without Christ know as their primary task is to serve the corruptible life of this bodily existence, which they ultimately defile and destroy. But the chief work of our all-good Lord Jesus Christ, our Life and Resurrection, Who loves mankind, is to forgive, to do good, and to give life.

For even in Hades, in the “nethermost parts of the earth,” He shattered with God-befitting power and authority its everlasting bars, in order to grant freedom to its hapless prisoners and to raise up into eternal life those who believed in Him—that is, the worthy ones: our Forefather Adam and his righteous descendants.

Saint Epiphanius of Cyprus emphasizes: “God does not simply save all when He appears in Hades, but even there He saves only those who believe; ...namely, all the righteous, who were offering unceasing prayers from there and seeking deliverance” (Homily on the Divine Burial of the Savior, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XLIII, cols. 440D, 453B).

Therefore, the souls of the righteous no longer descend into Hades, as before the Resurrection, but ascend to the Lord and are kept “in the hand of God” until the general Resurrection and the Second Coming.

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Beloved Fathers and Brethren:

We leap for joy and keep festival on this wondrous day of exultation. The new life of the age to come is now inaugurated.

Saint Gregory of Nyssa affirms that “After the Passion came the triumphs of joy. [The Lord] rose, and His Body was clothed with incorruption and immortality” (Oration V, “On the Luminous Holy Resurrection,” *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XLVI, col. 688B).

The God-Man Christ now shows us the “new man” of the new creation and renewal, and grants us, as members of His Holy Church—that is, of His Body—the gifts of His Grace:

- the good news of peace and blessing, in a world of wars and groaning;
- hope and joy, in a world of despair and dejection;
- light and life, in a world darkened and torn apart by strife;
- forgiveness and boundless, everlasting love, in a world filled with hostility, hatred, and enmity!

Falling down with wholehearted faith and love before the Risen Christ, let us ask in repentance for spiritual healing and restoration, for victory over the passions and sin, for fearlessness and courage in the face of threats and biological death.

Let us partake with longing of His Holy Gifts, His Body and Blood, that we may become Christ-bearers and Christ-like; let us abide with patience and expectation in holy obedience to Him; let us from the heart forgive “all things through the Resurrection,” and let us proclaim with all the strength of our soul:

Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen!

Holy Pascha 2026

† Archbishop Kallinikos of Athens
and the Members of the Holy Synod
of the Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians of Greece