

Athens, March 23/April 5, 2023

To be read in Church

Protocol no. 3243

*“O Thou Who art risen from the dead, raise us up who have fallen into sin”*  
(Resurrectional *Sticheron* in the Fourth Tone)

Beloved Fathers and Brethren in the [Risen] Lord:

The Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior and Healer, out of His exceeding goodness and compassion came “among us” and underwent dreadful suffering, the shame of insults and of the Cross, death, and burial, so as to overcome by His might our enemy, the Devil, to put death to death and to bestow freedom, life, and Resurrection by His Arising that saves the world.

God the Word came to earth and was made flesh, that is, assumed without sin our human nature, infirmity, poverty, and lowliness in an hypostatic union with Himself. In this manner He deified human nature, without laying aside its characteristic properties, which He maintained unaltered and preserved unchanged after the God-befitting union. Through all of His redemptive work and especially His Resurrection from the dead on the third day, He opened wide thenceforth the gates of Heaven so that nothing might impede our ascent and entry thereinto.

Our Lord, the God-Man, opens the Heavens which Adam had closed for our kind by his disobedience. He Who alone loves mankind descended into Hades and took up with Himself our Forefather and the Righteous of old, who had unjustly been held captive, and He awaits us, and indeed all of us, in His eternal Kingdom!

\* \* \*

The Risen Christ, our true God, regenerated us “of water and of the Spirit” (St. John 3:5), granted us the pledges of the good things for which we hope, and confers on us boundless benefits in His Holy Church, above all providing us with the spiritual repast of the Divine Liturgy, in order to render us immortal and to draw us out from the most baneful graves of sin.

However, just as at His Advent upon earth the multitude of people who heard His Divine words and saw His astounding miracles disbelieved by reason of the blindness of their spiritual senses, so also in every age, our own as well, the majority of people disbelieve, even though they hear and see the Risen One through His Church, by way of His Divine Scriptures and His wonderworking Saints.

Yet the problem is not only with unbelievers and false believers. It is also with us, the faithful, when we suffer spiritual defeat of any kind and when, out of spiritual sluggishness and indolence, we feel ourselves to be prisoners of our adversary, the Devil, through the malignancy of sin.

It is then, St. Isaac the Syrian admonishes us, that we should recall what effort we put forth at another time, what a struggle we waged, and what zeal we displayed to be delivered from spiritual captivity, and also what groans of repentance we emitted so that negligence might depart from us and Divine consolation might come to us again. In this way, awakening truly occurs, the flame of Divine zeal is rekindled, and hope rises up. Then it is that the soul rises from the dead and returns to its former good rank and estate (see his Second Discourse). Behold the experience of the Resurrection in our humble life!

St. Symeon the New Theologian proclaims that it is for this reason that God became man and was crucified, died, and arose, that He might grant us resurrection of the soul in this life. Then is our much-distracted mind corrected and collected in prayer and the study of the Divine words. Then is it healed and acquires knowledge and awareness of itself and of God (see *Alphabetical Chapters*, 12).

\* \* \*

Brethren and Fathers in the Risen Lord:

Christ arose also for us, the faithful of this contemporary age, who have been Baptized in the Orthodox manner and who confess His Truth with all boldness. So when we turn aside from some of His saving commandments, let us believe with unshakable certainty that we will not fail to attain to “health of soul.” Even for those of us who are negligent and remain behind, the Lord arose in order to draw and urge us on to His holiness!

As many as have fasted joyfully, but also as many as have fasted deficiently, let us repent enough to approach with faith Divine Communion of His precious Body and Blood, so that we may be filled with spiritual fragrance. As many as have kept our bodies pure from the filth of any carnal sin, strengthened, of course, by Divine Grace, let us approach the Table of Immortality, not on account of our righteousness, but on account of the goodness of Christ, the Most Pure Bridegroom. Let us receive healing of soul and body, and let us share in the exultation of divine delight: "This is the day which the Lord hath made; let us rejoice and be glad in it" (Psalm 117:24).

May we prove to be true pilgrims of the All-Holy Trinity upon earth, through a peaceful and tranquil life, and may we worship our Thrice-Holy God in Heaven unto the ages of ages. Amen!

Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen!

## THE HOLY SYNOD

The Archbishop

† KALLINIKOS of Athens

The Members

† IOUSTINOS of Euripos and Euboea

† GERONTIOS of Piraeus and Salamis

† CHRYSOSTOMOS of Attica and Boeotia

† GREGORIOS of Thessalonica

† PHOTIOS of Demetrias

† MOSES of Toronto

† DEMETRIUS of America

† AMBROSIOS of Philippi and Maroneia

† CYPRIAN of Oropos and Phyle

† KLEMES of Larisa and Platamon

† AMBROSE of Methone

† AUXENTIOS of Etna and Portland

† THEODOSIOS of Bresthena

† CHRISTODOULOS of Theoupolis

† MAXIMUS of Pelagonia

[signed and sealed as a BONA FIDE COPY]

The First Secretary of the Holy Synod

† Photios of Demetrias