



## GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

### **ENCYCLICAL OF ARCHBISHOP DEMETRIOS OF AMERICA FOR HOLY PASCHA 2008**

**4/16/2008**

Protocol 35/08

April 27, 2008

Holy Pascha  
The Feast of Feasts

For since death came through a human being, The resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; For as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ. (I Corinthians 15:21-22)

To the Most Reverend Hierarchs, the Reverend Priests and Deacons, the Monks and Nuns, the Presidents and Members of the Parish Councils of the Greek Orthodox Communities, the Distinguished Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Day, Afternoon, and Church Schools, the Philoptochos Sisterhoods, the Youth, the Hellenic Organizations, and the entire Greek Orthodox Family in America

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Christ is Risen!

It is with love, joy, and gratitude to God that we greet one another in these days. With the triumphant hymn, "Christ is Risen from the dead, trampling death by death, and to those in the tombs bestowing life" (Troparion of the Feast of Pascha), we declare the definitive victory over sin and death. As Orthodox Christians, we celebrate the Feast of Pascha each year with the belief and the knowledge that the Resurrection of Jesus Christ remains the most important event that has ever taken place in human history. Appropriately, our Orthodox Church refers to this event as the "Feast of Feasts."

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ presents us with an awesome and wondrous demonstration of the great power and eternal love of God for humankind. It is simultaneously an historic event that unfolded once in a specific time and location, yet its ramifications exceed the boundaries of time and continue to hold far-reaching, indeed cosmic levels of significance. By His death on the Cross for our salvation, His descent into Hades, and His resurrection, Jesus Christ has freed all of humanity from the bonds of sin and death, providing us all with a foretaste of eternal life in Him.

In his First Epistle to the Corinthians, Saint Paul, having detected some wrong ideas about the

resurrection among the Corinthians, wrote specifically to underscore the centrality of the resurrection of Christ to the Christian faith. Saint Paul observed that some in the community of Corinth who were calling themselves Christians did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. He told them that if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ too did not rise from the dead. Then, he reminded them in a strong use of language that "if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain...if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins" (I Corinthians 15:14-17).

In many ways, our contemporary society resembles the society in which the Corinthians lived. It offers a wide array of religious teachings, theories, and alternative understandings to the question of life after death. Because God has given to the people the freedom of conscience, we do not cast judgment on the teachings of other religions nor upon those people who hold them. We do insist, however, that on this day of Holy Pascha we are invited to come to a closer understanding of the centrality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ to the Christian faith and its fundamental meaning for our lives as Orthodox Christians.

My beloved faithful,

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is a miraculous event of the triumph of love, and it stands at the very center of our faith. It is at once an unrepeatable event and a constant reality that assures us of the victory of Jesus Christ over death, and of life with Him in His Heavenly Kingdom.

Christ is Risen! Truly the Lord is Risen! It is my fervent prayer that throughout this Paschal period the joy and eternal peace of the Risen Christ may abide with all of you in your hearts and homes, and that our joyous celebration of His resurrection may always reinforce within us the assurance that we will be made alive in Him forever.

With my warmest Paschal wishes  
And love in the Risen Christ,

+DEMETRIOS  
Archbishop of America

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