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PATRIARCHAL PROCLAMATION OF ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW FOR HOLY PASCHA 2008

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ON THE HOLY PASCHA

Protocol Number 477

+ B A R T H O L O M E W

BY THE MERCY OF GOD
ARCHBISHOP OF CONSTANTINOPLE - NEW ROME
AND ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH
TO THE PLENITUDE OF THE CHURCH
GRACE, PEACE AND MERCY
FROM OUR GLORIOUSLY RISEN SAVIOR CHRIST

Dearly beloved Brethren and Children in the Lord,

“Behold, the winter has passed!” (1) “Arise is the spring” of salvation; “flowers appear across the land, the sound of the turtle-dove is heard, ... the vines are in bloom and give forth their fragrance”. (2) A sacred Pascha -- great and holy -- has arisen; and it warms, lights and makes radiant the world. “Now all things are filled with light, both heaven and earth and the nethermost regions of the earth.” (3)

CHRIST IS RISEN!

Our God, Who is beyond all suffering and is Immortal, Who is the comely Bridegroom of the Church, our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is our Firstborn Brother and Dearest Friend -- “He is risen from the dead, having trampled down death by death” -- three days after He cried out from the crest of the Cross: “It is consummated!” (4) “Hades was embittered when it encountered” Him (5), because Christ destroyed his lordship. As God, He rightly emptied out his chambers of darkness, freely bestowing life on those He found in the tombs. But not only this; to all those who believe in Him from then until the consummation of the age -- indeed to all those who live in Him and hold fast their faith and confession in Him until the end, the Lord grants everlasting life and a sure resurrection. Christ, “Who has girded His loins with righteousness and clothed his sides with truth,” (6) is Risen from the Tomb. “As the One Who loves mankind, He has raised up Adam, the father of us all.” (7)

Behold then, dearly beloved brethren and children, the crown of our Great Feast and the

atmosphere of springtime; in the midst of its first bloom the Church announces the Good News to the Universe. The heavy winter of death has passed away! The icy tyranny of the devil and his domination have been overcome. The frightful reign of darkness and perdition has been undone. "The Lord is King, He has girded Himself with majesty!" (8)

We behold Jesus Who, of His own free will, out of His unconditional love, suffered on the Cross, died and was buried for our sake and for our salvation. We have just now worshipped Him Risen from the dead, and together with the Apostles and the Myrrh-Bearers we have heard from His holy mouth the words: "Peace be unto you!" (9) and "Rejoice!" (10) -- and our hearts are filled with joy. Indeed, "no one will take our joy from us," (11) because more than even our own, the personal death of every single human being has been mightily abolished. This is why we, who have crucified the carnal mindset of the old person "together with the passions and lusts," (12) and "who have died with Christ: this is the reason we believe that we [shall] live with Him." (13) For as "we have been buried" with Christ "through Baptism," (14) we have become "planted with Him," that is, we have become partakers of His Resurrection. (15)

St. Gregory the Theologian trumpets this truth with the highest rhetorical skill when he says: "Yesterday I was crucified with You, O Christ; today I abound with glory. Yesterday I died with You; today I am filled with life. Yesterday I was buried with You; today I arise with You." (16) That which has plagued us from ages past has once and for all been resolved by the Risen Lord. Our agony is over. "Christ is Risen, and life can truly be lived!" (17) From now on, Life and our Resurrection are not things to be sought for -- not dreams, neither a utopia. From here on, Life is, and the Resurrection is: concrete, tangible reality. A reality that has a specific face and name: "a name above every name" -- Jesus Christ-- before Whom "every knee shall bow -- whether in Heaven or on earth or under the earth," (18) and every tongue shall confess that He alone is Life-Giver and Lord. He is the One Who lives and reigns forever. He is the One Who by His ever-favorable will distributes His Kingdom, His glory and His inheritance from His Father, to all who share in His Cross, His death and His Resurrection, as "He is the Firstborn to many brethren." (19)

Him do we beseech, from our Martyric Patriarchal and Ecumenical See, that He grace the world with peace; that He illumine the souls of men with truth and righteousness; that He bestow patience and encouragement on those who face adversity; and that He grant the taste of salvation and life eternal to all believers.

Unto Him, Who is the Conqueror of Death and the Prince of Life, be the glory, dominion, honor and worship, together with Father and the Holy Spirit, unto the ages. Amen.

Holy Pascha 2008
BARTHOLOMEW of Constantinople
Your fervent intercessor
before the Risen Christ

To be read in the Churches during the Divine Liturgy of the Feast of Holy Pascha, immediately after the Holy Gospel.

1. Song of Songs 2:11

2. Song of Songs 2:12-13
3. Canon of Pascha
4. St. John 19:30
5. Isaiah 14:9
6. Isaiah 11:5
7. Service of the Resurrection
8. Psalm 92:1
9. St. John 20:20
10. St. Matthew 28:9
11. Cf. St. John 16:22
12. Galatians 5:24
13. Romans 6:8
14. Romans 6:4
15. Romans 6:5
16. Homily on Holy Pascha
17. Catechetical Homily of St. John Chrysostom
18. Philippians 2:9
19. Romans 8:29

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