
JOURNEY TO PASCHA

No. XI

Great & Holy Pascha



“Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, Who was crucified. He is not here: for He is risen, as He said.”

(Matt 28:5–6)

Arriving at our destination

As the saying goes, “happiness writes in white” – so what can be written about the most joyous “feast of feasts”, Pascha? It is not a time for reading, but of rejoicing and celebrating!

*“We waited, and **at last our expectations were fulfilled**,”* says St Nikolai of Ochrid, describing the Easter service at Jerusalem. *“When the Patriarch sang ‘Christ is Risen’, a heavy burden fell from our souls. We felt as if we also had been raised from the dead... Coming out from the service at dawn, we began to regard everything in the light of the glory of Christ’s Resurrection, and all appeared different from what it had yesterday; everything seemed better, more expressive, more glorious. **Only in the light of the Resurrection does life receive meaning.** (1 Cor 15:14)”* Today, after the rigours of Lent and Holy Week, we see the world in this light and celebrate; the weeks of preparation helped to heighten the sense of expectation so that we could feel the joy when it was “fulfilled”. It was necessary, not so that we could feel a false sense of relief, but so that the ‘accretions’ of the world could be washed off and we can see things as they really are: *“This is the chosen and holy day, first of sabbaths, king and lord of days, the feast of feasts, holy day of holy days. On this day we bless Christ **forevermore.**”* (Irmos 8, Paschal Canon) And so: ***“Let us embrace each other. Let us call ‘brothers’ even those who hate us, and forgive all by the Resurrection ...”*** (Final exhortations of Paschal Matins)

The Paschal Homily of St John Chrysostom

If any man be devout and love God, let him enjoy this fair and radiant triumphal feast. If any man be a wise servant, let him rejoicing enter into the joy of his Lord. If any have labored long in fasting, let him now receive his recompense. If any have wrought from the first hour, let him today receive his just reward. If any have come at the third hour, let him with thankfulness keep the feast. If any have arrived at the sixth hour, let him have no misgivings; because he shall in nowise be deprived thereof. If any have delayed until the ninth hour, let him draw near, fearing nothing. If any have tarried even until the eleventh hour, let him, also, be not alarmed at his tardiness; for the Lord, who is jealous of his honor, will accept the last even as the first; he gives rest unto him who comes at the eleventh hour, even as unto him who has wrought from the first hour.

And he shows mercy upon the last, and cares for the first; and to the one he gives, and upon the other he bestows gifts. And he both accepts the deeds, and welcomes the intention, and honors the acts and praises the offering. Wherefore, enter you all into the joy of your Lord; and receive your reward, both the first, and likewise the second. You rich and poor together, hold high festival. You sober and you heedless, honor the day. Rejoice today, both you who have fasted and you who have disregarded the fast. The table is full-laden; feast ye all sumptuously. The calf is fatted; let no one go hungry away.

Enjoy ye all the feast of faith: Receive ye all the riches of loving-kindness. Let no one bewail his poverty, for the universal kingdom has been revealed. Let no one weep for his iniquities, for pardon has shown forth from the grave. Let no one fear death, for the Savior's death has set us free. He that was held prisoner of it has annihilated it. By descending into Hell, He made Hell captive. He embittered it when it tasted of His flesh. And Isaiah, foretelling this, did cry: Hell, said he, was embittered, when it encountered Thee in the lower regions. It was embittered, for it was abolished. It was embittered, for it was mocked. It was embittered, for it was slain. It was embittered, for it was overthrown. It was embittered, for it was fettered in chains. It took a body, and met God face to face. It took earth, and encountered Heaven. It took that which was seen, and fell upon the unseen.

O Death, where is your sting? O Hell, where is your victory? Christ is risen, and you are overthrown. Christ is risen, and the demons are fallen. Christ is risen, and the angels rejoice. Christ is risen, and life reigns. Christ is risen, and not one dead remains in the grave. For Christ, being risen from the dead, is become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. To Him be glory and dominion unto ages of ages. Amen.



*Christ is risen from the dead,
Trampling down death by death,
And to those in the tombs He has given life!*

Beyond Pascha

“**Christ is risen from the dead...**” is the Paschal Hymn that is sung not just on Easter Day, but for the next forty days – on the fortieth day we remember Jesus’ ascension into Heaven (Acts 1:1-11). The Paschal Hymn replaces the prayer to the Holy Spirit “O Heavenly King...” in all services and private prayers until the Ascension. This very familiar prayer to the Holy Spirit will now not be said until Pentecost, a full fifty days after Pascha.

You will miss this prayer, no doubt, but that is the point. The journey we have taken together during the Great Fast is not unique to that time of year, but is a key part of the life of the Church at all times. And so, just as we fasted from food to heighten the expectation of Jesus’ Resurrection, now we fast from the prayer to the Holy Spirit to heighten the expectation of the Holy Spirit’s descent at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-31). With the Apostles, we celebrate and sing “Christ is risen!” – then after forty days we are amazed by His ascension into Heaven, but are left bereft as we stop singing both “Christ is risen...” and “Heavenly King...”; but ten days later, Jesus’ promise of the Holy Spirit is fulfilled and once again we pray for the Holy Spirit to “...come and abide in us [and] cleanse us from all impurity...”

Together, we “redeem the time” (Eph 5:16) in this way, marking it not by the movement of the stars and the sun, but by the movement of the Son of Righteousness and in the light of His Resurrection. Let us not forget, though, that all things have been achieved by Jesus now: Christ **is** born; Christ **is** risen; **is** ascended; **is** glorified; the Holy Spirit **is** here to guide us into all truth. Seraphim of Sarov greeted everyone with ‘Christ is risen’ at all times of the year. The permanent joy he felt led him to do this, and this was only possible with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. This is the goal for us all – for the joy of Pascha to be with us always, as the fruit of repentance.

Christ is Risen!	Χριστὸς ἀνέστη!	Христос воскрес!
He is risen indeed!	Ἀληθῶς ἀνέστη!	Воистину воскрес!
Hristos a învial!	Le Christ est ressuscité!	Christus ist auferstanden!
Adevărat a învial!	En verité il est ressuscité!	Er ist wahrhaftig auferstanden!
Христос възкресе!	הַמְשִׁיחַ קָם!	ქრისტე აღსდგა!
Воистина възкресе!	בַּאֲמַת קָם!	ჭემმარიტად აღსდგა!
مسیح برخاسته است!	ハリストス復活!	Atgyfododd Crist!
به راستی برخاسته است!	実に復活!	Yn wir atgyfododd!
Tha Crìosd air èiridh!	Христос воскрес!	یسوع مسیح زنده ہو گیا ہے!
Gu dearbh, tha e air èiridh!	Воистину воскрес!	ہاں یقیناً، وہ زنده ہو گیا ہے!
¡Cristo ha resucitado!	Πιχρὸς Τὸς ἀΨτωΝΨ!	基督復活了!
¡En verdad ha resucitado!	ἩΕΝ ΟΥΜΕΘΜΗι ἀΨτωΝΨ!	他確實復活了!
المسیح قام!	Chrystus zmartwychwsta!	حەسە محەلە!
بالحقیقة قام!	Prawdziwie zmartwychwsta!	ಹೊಸಹುತೆ ಹೊಸಹುತೆ!

