

**PASTORAL LETTER  
ON THE FEAST OF OUR LORD'S RESURRECTION 2013**

† NICOLAE

*by the mercies of God*

*Archbishop of the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in the Americas*

*To our beloved clergy and Orthodox Christians, peace and holy joy  
from Christ the Risen Lord, and hierarchical blessings from us!*

***“Why do you look for the Living among the dead? He is not here;  
He has risen!”*** (Luke 24:5-6)

**Most Reverend Fathers,  
Beloved Faithful,**

**Christ is risen!**

The Day of Resurrection brings us the joy of proclaiming to one another that our life does not end on this earth, but we too will rise again into eternal life, we who believe that Christ has risen. This joy comes from that of the Myrrh-bearing women, the first who received the angels' wondrous news at the empty tomb. This news reached the Apostles, who ran to see the empty tomb and marveled at what had happened (Luke 24:12).

We are familiar with the witness of the Holy Scriptures regarding the appearances of the Risen Lord and how He explained to the disciples the fulfillment of what had been prophesied about His Passion and Resurrection. The testimony of those who saw Him risen are of a special importance. St. Paul, in his letter to the Christians of Corinth, written around the year 51, speaks of Christ's resurrection in this way: “For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born” (1 Cor. 15:3-8). Our faith in the Lord's Resurrection is based on these testimonies of those who encountered Him. We believe their witness, but we also believe the experiences of all those who, in the Church, have encountered the Resurrected Christ.

For the resurrection of Christ is not a resuscitation, but a new life, a new way of existence. There is a huge difference between the resurrection of Lazarus or of the young man from Nain and that of Christ. This was not a survival, or a re-uniting of body and soul, but a new existence, an eternal one. The Savior's resurrection was not a simple return to the life He had lived before dying on the Cross, His earthly life, but a radical transformation of the mortal body through a creative operation on it. In his second letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul the Apostle speaks about the spiritualizing, about the filling of Christ's body with the power of the Holy Spirit, a power that then radiates in those who draw near to this resurrected body: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!” (2 Cor. 5:17). The resurrection of Christ has to do with this renewal of humanity, and through humanity of the entire creation.

The renewal of mankind began with the Incarnation of the Word, when the Son of God took upon Himself our fallen human nature. The Son of God raised it from its fallenness through the strengthening of human nature, by healing it of the infirmity of sin, by re-orienting it toward God the Father, the Creator. As God, Christ has the power to heal human nature of what theologians call the

passions, of its infirmities. This work of healing and renewal continues in the sacrifice on the Cross, in the offering of the life of humanity to God the Father, and it is fulfilled in the Resurrection.

Christ demonstrated His power as God, the power of life over death, even before His bodily resurrection, in the shattering of the gates of hell and the liberation from it of those who were awaiting His coming in hope. Christ defeated hell with His human soul, united with His divinity, Father Stăniloae tells us. He is the first soul that cannot be kept in hell, but escapes it and by His divine power also sets free the souls of those awaiting salvation. Out of Christ's completely divinized soul then springs forth the power that will also raise His body from the grave.

The risen Body of the Savior is permeated with the light of the Spirit. It is a spiritualized body, which is no longer limited by earthly things; it is our body's guarantee of the universal resurrection. The Risen Body of Christ radiates the light and power of the Spirit, filling the disciples also with this Spirit. This Spirit enables them to understand that in Christ the Scriptures have been fulfilled; this Spirit strengthens them to become witnesses of the Resurrection. This light and power of the Spirit is granted to all those who believe in the Resurrection of Christ: "And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18).

**Most Reverend Fathers,  
Beloved Faithful,**

Proclaiming the Lord's Resurrection we encourage one another to understand these discoveries. Namely, that Christ's Resurrection represents our renewal and the renewal of the world; that the Spirit brings us to new life in Christ and enables us to work toward our own resurrection already in this life through our encounter with the Risen One. The Apostles encountered this Christ who had suffered on the Cross and risen. The encounter changed their lives, and they in turn, with the power of Christ, changed the lives of many others. We too meet the Risen Christ in the mysteries of the Church, and we have the chance to have our lives renewed. In our world, increasingly estranged from God, ever more characterized by egoism, indifference and violence, we Christians can witness through our lives that the world can be different, even 2000 years after the unexpected event of the Resurrection.

At this glorious feast my desire for all of you, the clergy and faithful of our Archdiocese, is that you encounter the Risen Christ, that you let the light of the Resurrection shine in your life, that you will be witnesses of the encounter and of the renewal of life.

I embrace you in Christ the Risen Lord and I wish you a joyful Feast!

***Christ is risen!***

Your brother in prayer before God,

† NICOLAE

Chicago, the Feast of our Lord's Resurrection, 2013