

April 8, 2018: The Lord's Resurrection (Pascha, Easter)

Epistle: The Acts, 1:1-8:

The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Gospel: John 1:1-17:



In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent

to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received

Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.'" And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

By the grace of God, we have been found worthy to receive, once again, the light of Christ's resurrection in our hearts and in our souls.

On the night of the Lord's Resurrection, as well as throughout the Pascal season, Orthodox Christians sing, time and again, the hymn of Christ's victory over death and Hades: ***Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death and those in the tombs bestowing life.*** By so doing, they re-affirm their faith and hope in their own resurrection and victory over death and the evil forces.

As the assurance of our own resurrection, Easter is the foundation of Christianity, the "Feast of feasts" that opens the doors of Paradise and brings reconciliation between man and his Creator.

On behalf of the Church Board and the Ladies Auxiliary, I'd like to extend to all of our parishioners and supporters a Blessed Pascha, filled with joy and happiness!

CHRIST IS RISEN! INDEED HE IS RISEN!

Fr. George Bazgan

**PASTORAL LETTER
AT THE FEAST OF THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD 2018**

† IOAN CASIAN

by the mercies of God

Bishop of the Romanian Orthodox Diocese of Canada

*To our beloved Clergy and Orthodox Christians,
peace and joy from Christ the Lord,
and from us hierarchical Blessings.*

"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

(John 1, 12 - 13)

**Most Reverend Fathers,
Beloved Faithful,**

Christ is risen!

We are celebrating the Feast of joy and light, the Feast of feasts. The Orthodox Church rejoices in the victory over sin and death of our Lord who is *"the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have preeminence"* (Colossians 1, 18).

"We celebrate the victory over Death, the destruction of the deep abyss, and the birth of a new eternal life. With joy, we praise the Author of all things, the only Blessed One, God of our fathers, for He is worthy of all praise"¹ proclaims one of the troparia of Matins of Resurrection.

Why this triumphant and liberating joy?

The Scripture speaks of the creation of man *according to the image and likeness of God*.² The human person was to be the reflection of the unseen and limitless One in the creation made by Him. Every person was meant to contemplate in their fellow human beings the joy of God's image and the beauty of their deeds on the way to achieving the likeness. But the profound harmony and unity of this first foundation would crumble because of the temptation of the evil one and by disobeying the word of God, which caused fear, shame,³ and ultimately, death. The profound unity of human hypostases would be broken and the self-justification, pride, the struggle for survival and other passions would become a permanent presence in man's everyday life. The Sacred Scripture presents, in its narrative, this ambivalence of the creation: its intrinsic beauty as a reflection of the providence of God, and its disorder due to sin.

So, what is the significance of the Holy Easter night for us, Orthodox Christians, and for the whole Church?

Our greeting *Christ is risen!* already synthesizes the good news for a new world, a better world, in full communion with God. On the joyous night of the Lord's Resurrection, the sadness of death and of our drifting away from God disappears, because "*the risen Christ gives His victory to each one of us with His two hands*"⁴ says St. Nicholas Velimirovici. On the night of the Resurrection, man is called from death to life; he is endowed with the victorious power of Christ's uncreated and eternal light over the chaotic time of darkness, powerlessness and disorder. Our humanity, restored in the risen Christ, avails itself to the transcendent and the eschaton, becoming leaven for everyone unto revival, renewal and transfiguration. We are once again offered the possibility of becoming *sons and daughters*⁵, children of God through grace and "*fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.*" (Ephesians 2, 19).

We should ask ourselves: which is the path that leads to our primordial vocation? Christ offers Himself to us. But how does the power of His resurrection work in us? How does Christ's victory, through His Resurrection, become our victory? How can we regain the likeness with our Creator?

St. Basil the Great shows us the inner dynamics through which the image and likeness of God work in man toward his spiritual restoration, growth and development:

"*In our initial structure – says the Cappadocian Father - co-originates and exists our coming into being, according to the image of God. By free choice we are conformed to that which is according to the likeness of God. And this is according to free choice: the power is within us and we make it active through our deeds.... Having given us the power to become like God, He allows us to be artisans of our likeness to God, so that the reward for the work would be ours.*"⁶

St. Basil the Great talks here about the harmonization of the inner work of the *image*, as the gift of God to man, with that of the *likeness* as man's free and responsible choice through a theandric work in the Church.

St. John the Evangelist adds two essential elements: *our acceptance of Christ and faith in Him*⁷ - which help us understand the way the human person enters the dynamics of renewal in God. *The acceptance of God* restores the primordial bond between man and God. The doors of the human soul are opening to receive the Creator. The joy of friendship with a hint of eternity reveals its dawn. The '*Sunrise from above*' sends its rays to shatter the abyss of darkness. *The faith in His name* remains the element of permanence that maintains the possibility of making this journey in an authentic way. Faith sustains man's reason enlightened in the choices he makes by guaranteeing their authenticity.

¹ Ode 7th

² Genesis 1, 26 - 27

³ Genesis 3, 6 - 10

⁴ *Homilies to the Gospels on Sundays and Feasts*. Ed. L'Age d'Homme, Lausanne, Switzerland 2016 p 230 – 231

⁵ 2 Corinthians 6, 17 - 18

⁶ *On Human Condition*. (First Homily 1.6) St Vladimir's Seminary Press: Crestwood, New York 2005, p 43 - 44

⁷ John 1, 12

Once again, here is how the great Cappadocian understands the role of our accepting God and our faith in Him: "*As a reason-endowed being I have that which is according to the image (of God), but I gain the likeness (of God) by becoming a Christian.*"⁸ The acceptance of God means to assume freely man's rational condition while the faith in His name draws man closer to the Christian ethos. The Risen Christ is the solution to man's sin and death. Man is putting on Christ by living the life of God in his inner intimacy. God's will becomes man's will. Thus, each person will be renewed not according to the pattern of an immanent human ideology, but according to the pattern of the eternal life inspired by the Holy Spirit. The rebirth into the new life is made "*not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*" (John 1, 13) This way, man regains his primordial vocation through the inner unity of spirit and reason, reflected in his deeds.

Beloved faithful,

The Orthodox Faith and the Church have been the sustaining elements of the unity and the conscience of a common origin in faith and nationhood. The common ethos shaped by them prevailed over the difficulties resulting from the geographical position, the encounter of the Latin, Greek and Slavic cultures and the Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestant traditions. The Romanian identity and unity is based on what Father Dumitru Stăniloae identifies as the foundation of the entire Orthodox Church, namely "*Jesus Christ Himself with His sacrificed and risen body in her depths. ... The unity of the Church ... is an ontological - spiritual unity in Christ and in the Holy Spirit.*"⁹

Certainly, the moment of 1918 was a fulfillment and a climax. But this moment of unity of faith and nation would not have been possible without saints such as: the Apostle Andrew, the protector of Romania, Efreim or Teotim bishops of Tomis, Epictet and Astion, Filofteia from Curtea de Arges, Ioan Casian, Paisie of Neamt, Nicodim of Tismana, Paraschiva from Iasi, Teodora from Sihla, Ghelasie from Râmneș, Sava Brancovici, faithful kings Constantin Brâncoveanu, Neagoe Basarab and Stephen the Great of Moldavia, Varlaam and Dosoftei metropolitans of Moldavia, Iosif the New of Banat, Antim and Gregory of Ungro-Vlahia, Andrei Saguna of Transylvania and many others. Let us not forget also the metropolitans Sofronie of Moldavia and Nifon of Ungro-Vlahia, the bishop, metropolitan and first patriarch of Romania Miron Cristea and King Ferdinand the Ist. Here is a cloud of witnesses who, through faith, life and word, have achieved and maintained our unity of faith and nation. In the same spirit of unity, we should include our predecessors on the North American continent: Bishops Policarp and Andrei, Archbishop Victorin and Archimandrite Vasile Vasilachi, to mention only a few. Through their inspiring sacrifice, they resemble Christ, for "*greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.*" (John 15, 13).

The historical event of establishing the Romanian Orthodox Diocese of Canada constitutes a renewed opportunity for us for an increased mission and confession of faith in the apostolic spirit of unity, holiness and sobornicity. Let us emulate the aforementioned saints and confessors, for they are our wise and faithful guides for the unity of faith and nation, through the storms of this world, towards the harbor we all hope to attain: the kingdom of God and the salvation of our souls.

Let's become ourselves proud bearers of this living tradition of an apostolic Church, present and confessing, of a prophetic Church, inspired by the Holy Spirit for our time.

On the occasion of the Feast of the Lord's Resurrection, we extend our thanks to all the clergy and devout people of the Romanian Orthodox Diocese of Canada and wish you all unity, spiritual joy, health, peace and many blessings from our Lord Jesus Christ!

Christ is risen!

Yours in prayer to the Risen Lord,

† IOAN CASIAN

Saint-Hubert / Montreal 2018

⁸ *ibidem* note 6

⁹ *Dogmatic Theology.* (vol 2) Ed. EIBMO: Bucharest 2010, p 269 - 270

HOLY WEEK AND EASTER SCHEDULE

PALM SUNDAY

Blessing of Palms, Divine Liturgy 10:00 A. M.

HOLY MONDAY

Matins of the Holy Tuesday 7:00 P. M.

HOLY TUESDAY

Matins of the Holy Wednesday 7:00 P. M.

HOLY WEDNESDAY

Sacrament of the Holy Unction 7:00 P. M.

HOLY THURSDAY

Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great 10:00 A. M.

Service of the Holy Passion (12 Gospels) 7:00 P. M.

GOOD FRIDAY

Taking down from the Cross (Vespers) 3:00 P. M.

Lamentation Service 7:00 P. M.

GREAT SATURDAY

Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great 10:00 A. M.

HOLY PASCHA (EASTER)

Resurrection Service and Divine Liturgy 12:00 (midnight)

Blessing of the Easter baskets 3:00 A. M.

The traditional Easter fellowship will follow the blessing of the Easter baskets.

EASTER SUNDAY

Vespers Service 1:00 P. M.

BRIGHT MONDAY

Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM.

BRIGHT TUESDAY

Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM.

BRIGHT FRIDAY

Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM.

MEMBERSHIP

The Board of Directors extends a warm appeal to all supporters of our parish, asking them **to pay their membership until Easter.**

This way we can ensure that we have the necessary funds to fulfill our financial obligations during the Summer months and for the rest of the year as well.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

Virtual Library

Those who like to read can access our Virtual Library by **clicking here.** Any suggestions for books to be added to our virtual library should be sent to **webmaster@bisericaedmonton.org.**

As always, we welcome you suggestions, opinions and commentaries.

HAPPY READING!