

Holy Resurrection Festal Message 2014

My Beloved,

I wish you a very blessed Feast of the Holy Resurrection. Christ our Savior is risen indeed and has raised us with Him. He raised our state from bondage to liberty, from fear to hope, from sadness to joy, and from death to life. Before His holy resurrection, death and gloom were the inevitable fate of mankind. The holy resurrection opened the gates of paradise—the exalted realm of anticipation of the end of times. Death lost its power to contain the souls of the believers—captives in a downward state of defeat. *“I went down to the moorings of the mountains; The earth with its bars closed behind me forever; Yet You have brought up my life from the pit, O LORD, my God”* (Jonah 2:6).

Arise to reject doubt, mediocrity, and complacency, and accept faith, purpose, and initiative. The ship captain rebuked the prophet Jonah for his apathy, *“What do you mean, sleeper? Arise, call on your God; perhaps your God will consider us, so that we may not perish”* (Jonah 1:6). Likewise, the world looks to us as faithful Christians in a sometimes, bleak world, to call upon God in prayer. Arise with complete confidence in God’s love when you put your hands to good works and care for the house of the Lord—the church and the people, *“The God of heaven Himself will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build”* (Nehemiah 2:20). Awaken from the hypnotic frivolous cares of the world and arise in Christ our Good Savior who raised us with Him in his holy resurrection.

Arise to take the first step to repentance, and repentance leads to restoration, and restoration leads to life, and life is our Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance is a spiritual awakening—an action taken to correct an erroneous path of destruction. Repentance requires a commitment to move forward in the straight path through the narrow gate by the grace of God. The penitent prodigal son finally realized his deteriorated state and took action, *“I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you’* (Luke 15:18). To end, it dawned on him that his father’s wealth was not just monetary, but rather, that his genuine mercy was of greater value, *“How many of my father’s hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger”* (Luke 15:17)! Though a paralytic man of thirty-eight years thought he had no one to aid him, he was not overlooked by the Lord Christ who never took His eyes off him, *“Rise, take up your bed and walk”* (John 5:8). Yet, it was incumbent upon this former paralytic to discern that his condition was due to sin, and repentance was the real medicine. *“See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you”* (John 5:14).

Arise to encounter forgiveness. Our Lord Jesus Christ purposed to draw us near and witness true friendship through the account of an unlikely, but fortunate young man who had four loyal friends who shouldered him toward obtaining forgiveness. *“Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Arise, take up your bed and walk’”* (Mark 2:9)? The cost of forgiveness required the incarnation of the Logos who descended from His throne in heaven to our corrupted dwellings upon the cursed earth, and shed His precious blood upon the holy cross for our salvation. To what then can we

compare indolence, but to a gradual spiritual decline or perhaps even a spiritual death, while yet engaging in “life as usual”, wandering willfully without a moral compass? Let us then arise from indifference to encounter forgiveness and glorify Christ in His holy resurrection so that we may walk on the path of salvation with Him.

Arise to heed to the call of service and the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. Learn from the Apostle Matthew and do not hesitate. *“And He said to him, ‘Follow Me.’ So he arose and followed Him”* (Mark 2:14). Twice the Lord called to Jonah to “*arise*” and go to Nineveh for the service of saving a morally impoverished nation. *“But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD”* (Jonah 1:3). At the second call, Jonah finally responded having personally tasted God’s mercy. *“So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD”* (Jonah 3:3). Learn from the obedient novice prophet, Samuel, who was just a child at the time, but repeatedly arose without reluctance and fervently responded, *“Here I am! Speak, for Your servant hears”* (1 Samuel 3:1-10).

Arise to praise and glorify God and thank Him for His love, forgiveness, and everlasting mercy. *“Arise, O children of the Light, to praise the Lord of Hosts that He may grant us the salvation of our souls”* (Midnight Prayer). May the Lord bless you and keep you firm and resilient in the faith and joy of His holy resurrection. Let us pray together and beseech our compassionate Lord, God, and Savior, Jesus Christ, through the intercessions of St. Mary, the blessed Virgin Mother of God, and through the prayers of St. Mark the Evangelist and all the angels and saints to preserve the life of our honored Patriarch, His Holiness Pope Tawadros II, for many years and peaceful times.

To God be the glory, forever, Amen.

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