



HGBY Resurrection Feast 2019

Renewed Life in the Holy Resurrection of the Lord Christ

Christ is risen! Indeed, He is risen! I wish you an abundance of joy rejoicing daily in the glorious Resurrection Feast. The Holy Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is a rebirth for all humanity, a new beginning, a new future, a new life. Determined to accept the cross and death for our sake, the Lord added one prevailing commandment, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another" (John 14:34). This was neither a suggestion nor an afterthought. He clearly meant it and qualified it as significant to the commandment of loving God, "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). Thus, He informed His disciples of His deep desire and our future together. "In My Father's house are many mansions; if *it were not so*, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:2). How can you enjoy this new place if in your heart you still refuse to love your neighbor? Who will your neighbor be in heaven? We must live today as new spiritual creatures with eyes drawn to heaven.

We must be renewed in Christ's image and likeness that we may enter in the new life prepared for us. "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also" (John 14:3). His heart delighted in this new place where we would live with Him forever. We cannot enter eternity with our old habits, bearing grudges against one another, or rousing disputes with anyone. The Lord Jesus clearly told us that loving God and our neighbors are the most critical and equally great. "This is *the* first and great commandment. And *the* second *is* like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 22:38–40). Four commandments are based on our relationship with God and six on our relationships with each other. Thus, the Church ensures that the Prayer of Reconciliation follows the Orthodox Creed in the Divine Liturgy of the Faithful. This is faith and deed in action of which St. James spoke, "If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to

them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what *does it* profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead" (James 2:15–17).

The cross became the pathway to death, but Christ's victory over death leads to life. Throughout the next holy fifty days, we remind each other that Christ is indeed risen. This phrase has a deeper meaning that we ought to keep in mind as we say these joyful words and as we respond to them. This feast cannot be enjoyed unless our hearts are free of all that Christ Jesus came to purge. This feast cannot be enjoyed unless we are recreated as new beings. "Christ is risen" means that we have put on the resurrected Christ. God who came to save humanity from itself, its greed, its hatred, its discord, came to sow love and gather the fruits of our love. Thus, putting on Christ, is putting on love. Christ is risen and defeated death. Death is Satan's sting. Discord is the evil one's tool. Unless you strive to live in the resurrection of love, you remain in darkness, "But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes" (1 John 2:11). The Lord Jesus Christ has called us all to His table, His holy altar, to partake of His Divine Mysteries, but we must approach Him worthily and that means without malice or hypocrisy in our hearts. Let us now greet each other boldly in God's love and joy by saying these words with pure hearts, "Christ is risen; indeed, He is risen."

Through the intercessions and prayers of the Theotokos and all the angels and saints, we ask our Lord, God, and Savior, Jesus Christ, to preserve the life of our honored father and patriarch, His Holiness Pope Tawadros II, for many years and peaceful times.

God bless you.

Bishop Youssef

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