



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States
Resurrection Feastal Message 2024

Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!

In the Gospel according to our teacher St Matthew we read, “**And as they [the women] went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, ‘Rejoice!’**” (Mt 28:9); and thus one of our Lord’s first greetings after defeating death by His resurrection is *rejoice*. “**So they came and held Him by the feet and worshipped Him**” (Mt 28:9). We heard His calling today and begin together to worship Him for 50 days focusing on the joy of His resurrection, proclaiming that by His death He has conquered death for us all and He is *the resurrection of us all*. We rejoice because the Lord has passed over our sins, “**indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us**” (1 Cor 5:7). He showed us His mercy by not giving us the due penalty of our sins, but rather by His humility, His life-giving sufferings, and His life-giving death, He has opened the paradise of joy and given us a living hope of eternal life with Him.

The Lord comes to us in our times of sorrow and despair, as He did to St Mary Magdelene, saying, “why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?” and as He called her by name, He calls us each by name to remind us of His abundant care for us personally. St Gregory the Theologian says, “**We were created that we might rejoice**” (Oration 45:28). But what if I lack this true inner joy of the Lord? What if I am unable to see Him like St Mary Magdelene? He calls me by name to recognize and return to Him who is indeed present in my life and in whose “**presence is fullness of joy**” (Ps 15:11).

That we might rejoice, He waits for the *Prodigal Son* in us that runs away from Him. He runs out and pleads with the *Elder Son* in us that is proud and envious and does not accept the love of the Father towards our brothers and sisters returning from a life of sin—that we might rejoice. He seeks out the *Samaritan Woman* in us that allows our bodies & minds to be adulterated by corrupt relationships & material things—that we

might rejoice. He comes to us in the midst of our habitual sins like He went to the *Paralytic Man* after 38 years and reminds us that He is willing to heal us—that we might rejoice. He knows the situations, relationships, and difficulties we have been born in like the *Man Born Blind* and He desires to heal us—that we might rejoice. He seeks out the *Lazarus* in us that has been dead for months & years. He calls out to us: **“Lazarus, come forth!”** Truly, He is the conqueror of death and the harrower of Hades. The Lord of Glory is the Help of the helpless & the Hope of the hopeless and those in despair. Therefore, He also seeks out the *St. Peter* in us that has denied Him. He looks at us waiting for us to take time aside in prayer and look at Him as St Peter did that we may be brought to the joy of repentance by His merciful eyes. He even seeks the *Judas* in us that betrays Him at times and He greets us calling us friends to draw us to Him. Indeed, until our last breath He will be waiting for us and offering us a path of salvation like He did the *right-hand thief*—all that we may recognize Him and rejoice.

Thus, whomever we are, and in whatever state we are in in our life with God, He seeks us that we may enjoy more deeply the life of peace, purity, and righteousness in His presence.

St Gregory the Theologian summarizes, **“Christ is risen from the dead; rise with him. Christ has returned to himself; return. Christ is freed from the tomb; be freed from the bonds of sin.” (Oration 45:1)**

Today, let us receive His love and victory and **“Rejoice in the Lord always” (Phil 4:4);** for **“*This is the day which the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it.*”**

Through the intercessions of the Mother of God, Saint Mary, and all the angels, martyrs, and saints, we ask the Lord to preserve the life of our beloved father, His Holiness Pope Tawadros II, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark, for many years and peaceful times.

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Metropolitan Youssef

Bishop Basil

Bishop Gregory

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