



The Papal Encyclical of the Glorious Feast of the Resurrection, 2016

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, one God. Amen.

Ekhristos Anesti, Alithos Anesti.

I congratulate you my beloved for the Glorious Feast of Resurrection, and commend you the joy of this holiday. I congratulate the entire Coptic Orthodox Church. The Metropolitans, Bishops, priests, deacons, and boards of churches. I congratulate all the servants, youth, children as well as all the Christian families universally. I congratulate all Coptic dioceses worldwide. Happy Glorious Feast of Resurrection and may you remain healthy this and every year.

Indeed, the Feast of Resurrection is the epitome of all our feasts, the crowning of all our joy, and the thrill in our hearts. It is the feast that we celebrate daily. When talking about the Feast of Resurrection, we remember our Lord Jesus Christ who was crucified on the cross. He indeed died and there are many testimonies for this. These include the centurion, the guards of the tomb, the women who visited the tomb, Joseph of Arimathea who carried the body of our Lord Jesus Christ, and Pontius Pilate before whom the Lord was tried. Evidence of His death on the cross includes the splitting of the temple veil, the discovery of His shroud in the tomb, the large stone of the tomb, the guards guarding the tomb by order of the Roman governor. Finally, it also includes the seal over the tomb door as ordered by the Roman governor. Christ, who was crucified on the cross, rose again on the third day, as we recite and testify in the creed.

The testimony of His resurrection came from the angels. An angel declared that Christ has risen. The guards collapsed to the ground, and the chief priests circulated false rumors. And our Lord Jesus Christ appeared several times to His disciples. The evidence is extensive. Consider the earthquake that accompanied the resurrection of our Lord. The stone that was rolled back from the door of the tomb. We recall the account of the women proceeding to finish the burial spices at dawn of the resurrection and then finding the empty tomb, because He had risen leaving the linen cloths and handkerchief.

During the Feast of Resurrection, one may ask; Since the Resurrection happened in the early years of the first century (33 AD) what is the importance of the Resurrection for us today in the twenty-first century? What benefit is the resurrection of Jesus Christ?

I will discuss the value of the Resurrection in a few points.

(1) The resurrection compels one to realize his or her heavenly origin.

You are a heavenly creature, a heavenly being, created in the image and likeness of God. In His image mentally, and in His likeness intentionally.

The first man used this free will erroneously. The result was that he used this freedom to break the law and shatter the heart of God. Mankind plunged and the image of God was darkened. This darkness caused mental confusion and an inability to distinguish priorities. Man became unable to establish the truth. For a time, God communicated with people through the voices of the prophets and then through His incarnation. The goal was to repair the illuminated image and to reconcile this beautiful likeness. Resurrection happened to give man this renewed radiance. Man became enlightened. Therefore, Jesus said, "whoever believes in me should not abide in darkness" (John 12: 46) because the light of the Resurrection shines in this image restoring it to the likeness of God. This is the first benefit, that man recognizes his heavenly origin.

(2) The second point, man will live a life of hope and anticipation daily and not intermittently. Today we need this hope desperately. Remember Mary Magdalene, the distressed woman who went to the tomb, looking for her teacher and her master. When she heard someone talking to her she thought that He was the gardener. She was weeping intensely while seeking Christ. Finally, she found and recognized Him when He called her "Mary". She replied and cried out "Rabboni" (John 20: 16) which means my teacher, my master and my Lord. In the account of the Resurrection, Jesus appeared to two young men disheartened by the story of the resurrection of Christ. He appeared to them while they were walking to Emmaus near Jerusalem. At the end of this encounter, they said to one another, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road?" (Luke 24: 32). Their despair was replaced with optimism and hope. Similarly, it was with the disciples who were in great fear, but when Christ appeared to them we read in the Holy Bible: "Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord." (John 20:20)

(3) The third benefit of the resurrection to modern man is the acquisition of the grace of adoption through the resurrection. Daily the church experiences the resurrection and mentions it in prayer. When we pray the Prime prayers of the Agpeya, we remember the glorious resurrection that occurred at dawn. Every Sunday we gather to celebrate the Holy liturgy, as this is the day of the resurrection. This is the weekly feast. In the 29th day of every Coptic month, we celebrate the feasts of the Annunciation, the Nativity and the Resurrection. Annually we celebrate the Feast of Resurrection extending for 50 days called 'The Holy Fifty days.' This beautiful image by which we take the grace of adoption is acquired during baptism when we are submerged in the water 3 times analogous to the 3 days that were spent by our Lord Jesus Christ in the tomb. When we prepare to receive the Eucharist, the priest cries out in the last confession: "Given for us for our salvation, remission of sins and eternal life to those who partake of Him." In every liturgy we receive the Holy Body and Precious Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ to renew our life by the light of the glorious Resurrection. "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you." (John 6: 53)

Also, we cannot comprehend the words of the Holy Gospel except by understanding the resurrection. Our fathers who wrote the scriptures were inspired by God through their insight to the glorious resurrection. The resurrection is offered to all. It is our happiness. We should embrace this joy in our life and celebrate it daily. The resurrection is the renewal process of our life every year. Rejoice in the resurrection and live with it. Every night in our midnight psalmody we pray "Arise O children of the light, let us praise the Lord of hosts." This is the daily call of the church: "Arise O children of the light". Through the resurrection, we became the children of the light. Through the resurrection we stand and praise the Lord of hosts, as the Holy Bible says: "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4: 12) The glorious resurrection is a delight.

We pray that this joy dwells in each of our hearts. Every one of you should rejoice with the resurrection in your life, house, family, job, service and church daily. Let the resurrection be your joy when you wake up to start a new day so that your life would be revived continuously.

I repeat my congratulations to all and I rejoice with you, and convey the salutations of Egypt, and the Church of Egypt, all metropolitans and bishops of the Holy Synod, as well as the clergy and all congregations.

Ekchristos Anesti, Alithos Anesti. Christ is risen, Truly He is risen.

Pawlos II

