

The Important Things in Life  
The Holy Resurrection Feast 2021

My Beloved Children,

Christ is risen! Truly He is risen! We wish you a joyous Glorious Feast of the Resurrection.

Christ's ministry gave special attention to four important elements in life, which are family, friends, forgiveness, and faith. His resurrection initiated a new beginning in Him with four features accompanying life's journey, which are hope, happiness, healing, and heaven. The Lord's focus was never just on our sins, but on how to make us better. During the Holy Great Fast, we became acquainted with broken families, marital discord, loneliness, and helplessness. By these examples, the Holy Gospel narrated to us the sufferings and humiliation people endure, whether it is through social, emotional, or financial hardships. Yet, Christ's message was on building our spiritual resilience for which we must strive. His conversations were to lead us to salvation. He encountered every type of misery to allow us to see ourselves in these individuals and take note of our own weaknesses. We can recognize something in these lost souls that resemble some unflattering traits in ourselves, and may finally realize that as He drew near to them with compassion, He sees us in our wretched state. If only we would allow Him to make us whole, we would find true peace for He is the King of Peace. His words and actions professed His amazing love: "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you. Again I will build you, and you shall be rebuilt, O virgin of Israel!" (Jeremiah 31:3-4).

Through His death and resurrection, He is rebuilding us. He is reconstructing our thoughts and our hearts, as prophesied by Ezekiel: "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 36:26). How can He refer to Israel as a virgin, when she often played the harlot by consistent idolatry and abandoning God for greedy pursuits to gain worldly power, riches, and the pride of life? What hurt Christ the most were not the whips, nor the cross, nor the tomb because His love covered our shame. What hurts Him the most even until now is the destruction of the family. He gently provided a profound message on preserving marriage and restoring the family unit. The disassembling of the family has been a key weapon at Satan's disposal from the beginning. He tried to sow a wedge between Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Abraham and Sara, Jacob and Esau, Joseph and his brothers, Moses and his siblings, and Saul and Jonathan. The prodigal son and the Samaritan woman were also products of the vicious attacks on marriage and the family and the outcome of discord is more and more evident in today's societies and toxic cultures.

Godly friends are harder and harder to find. Even the Lord encountered disloyal friends. Out of twelve, only one, St. John the Beloved, stayed by His side during His hardest time and proved to be the truest friend and disciple. Though this is the only disciple who did not endure martyrdom, his faithful proximity to the Lord during His crucifixion and death may have been much harder to endure than if he had been martyred himself. He also stepped up to care for St. Mary for the remaining years of her life. With all the pain that Christ endured and could barely breathe while He hung on the cross, He had to secure a safe shelter for His dear mother, whom He highly esteemed. It is no wonder that our early Church Fathers fought vehemently against all heresies that denied that St. Mary is the Mother of God.

The holy resurrection is not just a miracle, but it is the transformative power of Christ's resurrection in converting stony hearts that is more astounding. No acts of miracles and no persuasive rhetoric convinced a forgiven career thief, but he swiftly took Paradise by his sincere repentance. Faith captivated the

centurion whose life would end in martyrdom and happiness was found at the empty tomb by a hopeful servant who had been exorcized of seven demons. The Lord's greatest joy was and still is in healing relationships. Thus, the restoration of the Apostle Peter was foremost on His healing agenda to rebuild relationships. Let us build and rebuild, not merely buildings and structures, but marriages, families, and godly relationships. Onward to heaven, the Lord led His disciples to witness His ascension, and unto heaven, we must fix our eyes, confidently and joyfully striving to enter into His kingdom.

We pray for our honored father and patriarch, His Holiness Pope Tawadros II, and beseech the Lord to preserve his life upon his throne for many years and peaceful times.

God bless you.

Bishop Youssef

Bishop Basil

Bishop Gregory