



Coptic Orthodox Church الكنيسة القبطية الأرثوذكسية

Diocese of Los Angeles,

Southern California, and Hawaii

إيبارشية لوس انجلوس

BISHOP SERAPION

Paschal Message for the Glorious Feast of the Resurrection

May 2013

“Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who with them”

(2 Kings 6:16)

My Beloved, the Blessed Children of the Holy Church,

Χριστος Δνεστη Δληθως Δνεστη

Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!

It is my pleasure to wish all of you a Glorious Feast of the Resurrection of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus.

The Resurrection of Christ gives us strength in time of weakness and allows us to feel the Divine power, which is with us and is greater than the power of evil, upon which those who persecute us and fight against us depend on. Fear penetrates into our hearts when we see the power of evil fighting against us, and we don't see the Divine power supporting and surrounding us.

When the King of Aram sent horses, chariots, and a big army to surround the city of Dothan to capture Elisha the Prophet, Elisha's servant was afraid and disturbed. He told Elisha, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" (2 Kings 6:15) Elisha answered him saying, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." (2 Kings 6:16). "And Elisha prayed and said, 'Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.' Then the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha." (2 Kings 6:16-17)

When our Lord Jesus Christ met the two disciples of Emmaus, they were deeply distressed, and they did not know Him. Our Lord said to them, "What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?...So they said to Him, 'The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides, all this today is the third day since these things happened.'" (Lk 24:17-21). These words expressed the condition of despair, as if the story of Jesus of Nazareth has ended. But once their eyes were opened and they recognized Him, their condition changed "and they said to one another, 'Did not our heart burn within us while He opened the Scriptures to us?' So they rose up

that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, 'The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!' (Lk. 24:32-34)

When our Lord Jesus Christ was arrested, the disciples were afraid and ran. Peter denied Christ three times claiming he did not know Him. After the crucifixion, the disciples were gathered with the doors shut for fear of the Jews. But when our Lord Jesus Christ came and stood in their midst, and said to them "Peace be with you." (Jn. 20:19), their situation changed. The Holy Bible says, "Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord." (Jn. 20:19). "So Jesus said to them again, 'Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.' And when He said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'" (Jn. 20:20-23)

It is the power of the Resurrection that enlightened the minds of the two disciples of Emmaus, opening their eyes making them recognize Christ. Consequently, their fear and despair were turned to joy, power, and motivation to return to Jerusalem to inform the rest of the disciples.

It is the power of the Resurrection, which changed the disciples' sadness to joy. They were changed from a frightened, weak, and terrified group to a strong group calling on the whole world to believe in Christ. They were able to face the evil powers with courage and evangelize openly without fear or hesitation.

It is the power of the Resurrection that opened the eyes of Elisha's servant to see the Divine power surrounding his master, and therefore the army and chariots of the King of Aram became small in his eyes.

My Beloved,

During this feast, we bid farewell to our beloved martyrs of El-Khosous and the Cathedral.

During this feast, we painfully remember the criminal aggression against St. Mark Cathedral in Cairo.

During this feast, we remember the suffering of our beloved brothers and sisters in Egypt from persecutions and aggression against the sacred places, as well as the kidnapping of girls and the attacks by the trumpets of fanaticism.

We see the power of evil surrounding our beloved, as the army of the king of Aram surrounded Elisha and his servant. However, we look up to our Risen Christ and our eyes will be opened to see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. We will hear the joyful Divine voice saying to each of us, "Fear not for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand. Behold, all those who were incensed against you shall be ashamed and disgraced; they shall be as nothing, and those who strive with you shall perish. You shall seek them and not find them. Those who contended with you, those who war against you shall be as nothing, as a nonexistent thing. For I, the Lord your God, will hold your right hand, saying to you, 'Fear not, I will help you.'" (Is. 41:10-13)

We pray that our Living Christ may grant us always opened eyes, enlightened by the light of His glorious Resurrection, so we may always see that those, who are with us, are more than those, who are with them.

We pray for the peace of the Holy Church and for our beloved father, His Holiness Pope Tawadros II.

We pray for the repose of the souls of our beloved martyrs and for the comfort of their families, as well as for the speedy recovery of the injured ones.

We pray that peace may prevail throughout the whole world.

Wishing you many happy returns.

Bishop Serapion