



COPTIC ORTHODOX DIOCESE OF NORTH, SOUTH CAROLINA & KENTUCKY

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, ONE GOD. AMEN.

My beloved children in the Lord: priests, deacons, servants, members of church committees, and all the congregation. Grace and peace be multiplied to you from our risen Lord Jesus Christ, the King of Glory and the Conqueror of death. On this glorious night, I greet you with the triumphant words that echo from the empty tomb to the ends of the earth: **Christ is risen! Truly He is risen!**

St. John Chrysostom wrote, saying:

"O Death, where is your sting? O Hell, where is your victory? Christ is risen, and you are overthrown. Christ is risen, and the demons are fallen. Christ is risen, and the angels rejoice. Christ is risen, and life reigns. Christ is risen, and not one dead remains in the grave."

Tonight, we do not merely recall a distant miracle or commemorate a historical event. We proclaim a present and eternal truth: that Jesus Christ, the King of Glory, having tasted death for our sake, has broken its power and risen from the dead, trampling down death by death and bestowing life upon those in the tombs.

And not only those in the literal tombs, but each of us who has ever felt trapped in tombs of despair, guilt, fear, or hopelessness. His resurrection is not just a past event; it is a living reality.

As we read in the gospel of St. John 11:25-26

"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

These are not just comforting words; they are the very essence of our faith. These were the words of our Lord at the tomb of Lazarus — spoken to Martha not just to soothe her grief, but to awaken her to a truth that transcends both suffering and death.

The question that the Lord asked Martha is the same question He asks us tonight: **DO YOU BELIEVE THIS?**

Do you believe that Jesus is not only risen, but He is also alive and present with you now? That He is not a distant Savior, but also an active Power in your life today? That the resurrection is not only a future promise, but also a present reality? For if we truly believe this, everything changes.

Too often, we think of the resurrection as something that happened to Jesus 2000 years ago, or something that might happen to us after we die. But tonight, I urge you to see that the resurrection is not just an event—it is a Person. Jesus Christ does not merely give life—He is Life itself.

As we pray before every reading of the Holy Gospel,

"You are the life of us all, the salvation of us all, the hope of us all, the healing of us all, and the resurrection of us all."

Christianity is not just a set of teachings to study or beliefs to acknowledge; it is a life to be lived. Christ did not rise from the dead simply to prove His divinity; He rose so that we, too, might rise with Him—not only after death, but here and now.

He did not come to give us information about Himself, rather He came to share life with us, to dwell in us, to make us partakers of the divine nature. This is the very heart of our Orthodox understanding of salvation when we say, ***"He took what is ours and gave us what is His."***

This means our resurrection begins today. In every Liturgy, and in every one of the Church Mysteries, we touch the risen Christ, and we are touched by Him. In Baptism, we are buried and raised with Him. In



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Chrismation, we receive His Spirit. In the Eucharist, we partake of His Body and drink His Blood, and He abides in us and we in Him.

We are not just remembering Him—we are encountering Him—and none of that would be possible without the resurrection.

As St. Gregory the Theologian said:

“Yesterday I was crucified with Him; today I am glorified with Him. Yesterday I died with Him; today I am made alive with Him. Yesterday I was buried with Him; today I am raised up with Him. Let us offer to Him Who suffered and rose again for us ourselves, the possession most precious to God and most proper. Let us become like Christ, since Christ became like us. Let us become Divine for His sake, since for us He became Man.”

Through the Resurrection, the same voice that shattered the silence of death at Lazarus' tomb echoes throughout the Church tonight: “COME FORTH!”

Come forth, O soul trapped in addiction. Come forth, O heart heavy with guilt. Come forth, O mind clouded by fear. Your Savior calls you by name. The same One who rose from the tomb now stands at the door of your heart and knocks.

Do not delay. Do not doubt. Christ is risen—and that changes everything.

Let us therefore go forth tonight in joy. Let us leave behind the grave clothes. Let us embrace the One who is the Resurrection and the Life—not just in eternity, but also today. May our homes, our relationships, our speech, our service, and our churches reflect the truth that Christ is risen, and we are risen with Him.

Through the never-ending intercessions of the Holy Theotokos, St. Mary, and the intercessions of the great Archangel Michael, and through the prayers of our holy Father and Shepherd, His Holiness Pope Tawadros II.

Christ is risen! Truly He is risen!

Bishop Peter

Bishop, Diocese of North, South Carolina & Kentucky
And Papal Vicar of the State of Virginia