

EASTER 2008

Reverend Fathers, Honourable Presidents,
Esteemed Members of the Community Councils
Philoptochos Societies, Teachers, Students, & Youth
And to the entire plenitude of our
Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Toronto (Canada)

WITH PURE HEARTS

By Metropolitan Sotirios

Angels in Heaven sing praises to Thy Resurrection, O Christ our Saviour; grant that we who are on earth may also glorify Thee with pure hearts.”
Angels were the first witnesses of the Resurrection of Christ. Not only were they witnesses, but they were also the first to sing hymns of praise and glory. The angels themselves were amazed at beholding the Resurrected Christ ascending to the Heavens in His human nature.

Witnesses to the Resurrection of Christ were also all those who saw Him resurrected. His twelve disciples, especially the evangelists, describe the events of the Resurrection of Christ in the Gospels. St. Paul, His former persecutor and eventual Apostle to the Nations, became another witness to the Resurrection of Christ. In all of the epistles he authored, St. Paul marvels at and praises the Resurrection of Christ.

Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself witnesses and testifies to His own Resurrection. He proved to His disciples that He is not a ghost when He asked them if they had anything to eat – and to prove this – He ate broiled fish and honey which they gave Him.

Faithful Christians – those who have pure hearts – are also witnesses to the Resurrection of Christ. Christ Himself said, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” Whoever has a clean heart and the desire to do the will of God, becomes a witness to the Resurrection of Christ and has no doubt of this reality.

Unfortunately today, vicious propaganda and slander against the Resurrection of Christ continually appear in the media and are spread about by others. There are many enemies who war against Christ. We should be aware of who these people are who go to great lengths to wage war against Christ and His Resurrection.

Those who war against Christ and His Resurrection are those who do not have a pure heart and do not want to do the will of God. They are people who are attached to the material things of the world and do not raise their eyes to marvel at the eternal realities that exist in heaven. They are people who have been deceived by Satan himself and who serve his plans.

Those who war against Christ and His Resurrection often present themselves as educated and intelligent people or as followers and exponents of other religions. Those who present themselves as educated and intelligent people, believe that through logic they can understand everything around them. They are not being realistic, since they cannot explain logically the existence of the universe and how it came about. The followers of other religions also fall into the snare of the evil one, wanting to explain things logically. Yet, they speak absurdities. In their own religions, they accept that miracles can occur. Yet, in the case of Christ, they say, “How can God give birth to humans?” or “How can a man also be God?” and many other such statements. They accept that God is Infinite, Almighty and beyond comprehension, and also that miracles can occur. Why can they not accept that God can perform the miracle of the Incarnation of His Son and the Resurrection of Christ, who is both God and Man?

Let us now leave the negative and come to the positive. Let those who war against Christ say whatever they wish. The truth is that Christ is Theanthopos – He is both God and Man. We believe that Christ was crucified, buried, descended to Hades and resurrected in glory. Further, we believe that Christ ascended to the heavens and raised up to the heavens our own human nature which He accepted. We also believe that this same Christ Himself will come to judge the living and the dead. He is always the same Christ yesterday, today and forever. He is the same Christ who, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, created the world. At His Second Coming, He will judge both the faithful and the unbelievers: those who accept Him as the Resurrected God Man, and those who have not believed and waged war against Him.

My beloved Christians: We have all come to Church this evening to celebrate and glorify the Resurrection of Christ, because we all believe in the Resurrection of Christ. We must ask ourselves these questions: Do we celebrate the Resurrection of Christ with a pure heart? Do we always have the desire to do the will of God? Do we understand the exact dimensions of the Resurrection of Christ, and what this means for us? Do we contemplate and understand life after death in eternity? Do we live our lives in such a way that it will ensure for us eternal life at the Righteous Judgment of Christ? Every one of us must give answers to these questions and do all that we can to harmonize our lives with the will of God. If we do not give answers to these questions today, we will have no choice but to give them before the Resurrected and Righteous Judge at His Second and Glorious Coming.

My beloved Christians: with pure hearts, **“Come receive the Light from the light that can not be overtaken by night, and glorify Christ, who is Risen from the dead.”**

With fatherly love and fervent prayers in the Resurrected Christ,

Metropolitan Archbishop Sotirios of Toronto (Canada)
Head of the Greek Orthodox Church in Canada

TS:pa

Note: To be read in our Churches during the Anastasis Service, before “Come Receive the Light....”