



## ΓΝΗΣΙΑ ΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΟΣ ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ ΤΗΣ ΕΛΛΑΔΟΣ

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΗ ΣΥΝΟΔΟΣ ΠΑΤΡΩΟΥ ΒΟΡΤΟΛΟΓΙΟΥ

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April 5, the Year of Our Lord 2020

(April 18, 2020 NS)

*Great and Holy Saturday*

### The Paschal Epistle of Bishop Irineos

Reverend Fathers, Deacons, Clergy, Faithful, Catechumens  
and Friends of the Avlona Synod in North America,

Christ is Risen!

In this most difficult of Paschal seasons, I greet you with a fraternal kiss, and express to you my continuing sorrow for this time of trial which sees us separated one from the other, both amongst our parishes and missions and within each parish. We grieve that we are unable to worship together as one body. We despise the circumstances which leave any of the faithful deprived of access to the Holy Mysteries. It is during these struggles that we are each more in need of the divine energies of God, which are vouchsafed to us in the Holy Mysteries guarded by the Church.

But even these darkest of days cannot compare to the blackness of those nights almost two millennia ago, when the followers of Jesus who was called the Christ, mourned their crucified teacher whom they had lain in a tomb, and whose body was behind a rock sealed and guarded by the Roman watch. As we await this Pascha, with perhaps our hearts or countenances darkened by the situation we face, we will soon be bathed in the unrelenting light of our savior. As St. John of Damascus says of Pascha, "Now all things have been filled with light, both heaven and earth and those beneath the earth."

And just as the sorrow of the disciples and the women who stood at the foot of the cross was turned to joy at His rising from the dead, so too, we rejoice this day as we celebrate the Holy Pascha of our Lord. And we do not rejoice alone. As St. John Chrysostom said, "Today the Angels leap with joy and all of the Heavenly Powers rejoice, elated because of the salvation of mankind." So while many of us are unable to gather, know that those of us serving tonight are praying with you, celebrating with you, and rejoicing with you, along with the angels and all the heavenly hosts.

So while we grieve our current separation, we are reminded of the Resurrectional Kontakion of St. Romanus the Melodist: "Suddenly sorrow has been changed to joy, And all has become joyous and a cause for rejoicing." Brothers and sisters, let us rejoice boldly in the rising of our Lord. Let us shout our declaration of faith in the sanctuaries, from the balconies, from the doorsteps and from wherever we may be, as we testify to this broken world:

Christ is Risen! Indeed, He is Risen!

May we all share in Christ's Holy Resurrection,



+ Irineos

Vicar Bishop for North America

