

## RESURRECTION PASTORAL LETTER 2022

### RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD AND GOD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST

Christ is risen! Truly, He is risen!

Then Abraham said to the rich man, *“If your brothers will not listen to Moses or to the prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone should rise from the dead.”* Luke 16:31

Beloved Spiritual Children in Christ:

Reverend Clergy, Venerable Monastics and Devout Faithful of our God-protected Episcopate:

*May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ send you grace and peace,  
and from us, hierarchal blessings!*

Dearly Beloved in our Risen Lord:

In the Book of Genesis, we hear that God created everything and that everything was good, and that the creation of man was very good. The Creator’s love for mankind was and is ever such, and even though we, His children, choose to turn our backs toward Him, He never turns away from us. Today, we are celebrating God’s unending love for us, the promise of our salvation. It is the turning point in human history. Saint John Chrysostom reminds us: *“Today Christ liberated the nature of man from the tyranny of the devil and restored it to its previous nobility”* (A Homily on the Holy Pascha).

Not all mankind has responded nor responds to this divine invitation to eternal restoration with our Creator. Our Lord, Himself, authored those statements in the parable of “The Rich Man and Lazarus.” He reminded His audience, and us, that through the ages, God has, in many ways, shown and revealed His unconditional love. Humanity, however, is skeptical of such all-embracing love even though it has been made known to all by Christ’s cross and grave on our behalf. Jesus tells us that to believe in Him and in His resurrection is a matter of choice, free will.

This liberating action of God began when Adam and Eve, after having rejected Him as their source of life, became shackled with death. Saint Romanos sings: *“Overcome by love, [God] came into the world to seek His creature who had wandered. He makes the search. He is made flesh from his mother whom He cleansed ... and sanctified...”* (‘The Life and Resurrection’ Kontakia from “On the Resurrection IV”).

We, like the “Rich Man”, have also been informed, so we have no excuse not to believe. Each Sunday during the Great Paschal Fast, we celebrate the Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great in which we also are reminded of the Lord’s parable in this prayer of the Anaphora:

*“You did not forget the work of Your hands. Through the tender compassion of Your mercy, You visited him in various ways: You sent the prophets; You performed mighty works by Your saints, who in every generation were well-pleasing to You; You spoke to us by the mouth of Your servants the prophets, foretelling to us the salvation which was to come; You gave us the law as a help; You appointed angels as guardians. And when the fullness of time had come, You spoke to us through Your Son Himself, by Whom You also made the ages”* (St. John Chrysostom, Baptismal Instructions).

The Father spoke to us; He sent His Son, our Redeemer, Jesus Christ with the original invitation to eternal life. Are we impatient? Listen again to St. John Chrysostom: *“Are we only dying with the Master and are we only sharing in His sadness? ... let me say that sharing the Master's death is no sadness. Only wait a little and you shall see yourself sharing in His benefits. 'For if we have died with Him,' says St. Paul, 'we believe that we shall also live together with Him'.”* (Baptismal Instructions)

To whom are these words addressed unless to all humanity, to us. How have we died with Christ? Were you baptized? Then you were buried in the waters as Christ was buried in the tomb. Did you come out of the waters? Then you resurrected as a prototype of his resurrection. St. John Chrysostom continues: *“For in baptism there are both burial and resurrection together at the same time. He who is baptized puts off the old man, takes the new and rises up, just as Christ has arisen through the glory of the Father.”* (Baptismal Instructions)

Belief in the resurrection must shape our decisions; therefore, we must “Put off the old person.” Saint Cyril of Jerusalem warns us: *“He who believes that his body shall remain to rise again, is careful of his robe [that is, his body], and defiles it not with fornication; but he who disbelieves the Resurrection, gives himself to fornication, and misuses his own body...”* [Catechetical Lectures: Lecture 18, no. 1].

The rich man in the parable said he knew of Moses and the prophets; nevertheless, he did not live as though there was a resurrection unto judgement. Thus, our response to the promise of blessed resurrection, of unending existence, must be the basis for our life-long actions. *“He who has raised Him from the dead will raise us also, provided we do His will, make His commandments our rule of life, and love what He loves; if we abstain from every kind of wrongdoing, avarice, love of money, slander, and false testimony ...”* (St. Polycarp, Epistle to the Philippians in The Didache).

Saint Cyril of Jerusalem further enlightens us:

*“We shall be raised therefore, all with our bodies eternal, but not all with bodies alike: for if a man is righteous, he will receive a heavenly body, that he may be able worthily to hold converse with angels; but if a man is a sinner, he shall receive an eternal body, fitted to endure the penalties of sins... God will assign this portion to either company; for we do nothing without the body. We blaspheme with the mouth, and with the mouth we pray. With the body we commit fornication, and with the body we keep chastity. With the hands we rob, and by the hand we bestow alms, and the rest in like manner. Since*

*then, the body has been our minister in all things, it shall also share with us in the future the fruits of the past.” (Catechetical Lectures: Lecture 18, no. 19)*

Likewise, St. John Chrysostom renews our hope: *“Were there not the Resurrection, then how could the truth of God have been preserved, when so many evil people flourish and so many good ones suffer and end their lives in suffering? Where do all of these people receive their just reward, if there is no Resurrection?”*

*“True life on earth indeed begins from the Resurrection of the Savior, for it does not end in death. Without the Resurrection of Christ, human life is nothing else but a gradual dying which finally inevitably ends in death. Real, true life is that life which does not end in death. And such a life became possible on earth only with the Resurrection of the Lord Christ, the God-man. Life is real life only in God, for it is a holy life and by virtue of this an immortal life” (Father (St.) Justin Popovich, Orthodox Faith and Life in Christ).*

Dearly Beloved, we have heard what encouragement the holy Fathers offer us, the Orthodox, right-believing Christians, to live the few years on this earth in such a way as to be ready for the unending life to come in the eternal resurrection of the body. This is what we are celebrating today: a new birth, and eternal life, conversation with our Creator, Savior, and Sanctifier.

Let us learn from our Lord’s parable, for we too had Moses and the prophets; but above all, we have the reality that our Lord Jesus Christ died and was buried and rose on the third day as Scripture says, and we with Moses and the prophets and apostles and saints together with the heavenly hosts confess and cry out: Christ is risen! Truly, he is risen!



**+NATHANIEL**

**By the Mercy of God, Archbishop of Detroit  
and the Romanian Episcopate of America and Canada**