

a little Pascha, commemorating Christ's Resurrection. At Pascha, we read St. John Chrysostom's Easter Sermon where it is proclaimed, "O death, where is your sting? O Hades where is your victory? Christ is risen, and you are annihilated . . . Christ is risen, and life is liberated . . . for Christ having risen from the dead, has become the first fruits of those who fall asleep."

Brothers and sisters!
Christ is Risen! *Truly, He is Risen!*

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THE CATECHETICAL PASCHAL HOMILY

of our Father Among the Saints, St. John Chrysostom

If there are devout and God loving people here, let them enjoy this beautiful, radiant festival. If there are prudent servants, enter joyously into the Lord's joy. Whoever may be spent from fasting, enjoy now your reward. Whoever has toiled from the first hour, receive today your just settlement. If any came after the third hour, celebrate gratefully. If any of you arrived after the sixth, have no misgivings, you have lost nothing. If some have been as late as the ninth, come forward, do not be at a loss. If any of you have arrived only at the eleventh hour, do not be dismayed for being late.

The Master is gracious: He accepts the last even as the first; He gives rest to those of the eleventh as well as to those who have labored from the first; He is lenient with the last while looking after the first; to the one He gives, to the other He gives freely; He accepts the labors and welcomes the effort; honors the deed, but commends the intent. So, all of you, enter into the joy of our Lord: first and second, share the bounty. Rich and poor alike, celebrate together. Sober or heedless, honor the day. Those who fasted and those who did not, rejoice today. The table is full, everyone fare sumptuously. The calf is fatted; no one go away hungry. Everyone, savor the banquet of faith; relish the riches of His goodness.

No one need lament poverty, for the kingdom is seen as universal. No one need grieve over sins; forgiveness has dawned from the tomb. No one need fear death; the Savior's death has freed us from it. While its captive He stifled it. He despoiled Hades as He descended into it; it was angered when it tasted His flesh. Foreseeing this, Isaiah proclaimed: "Hades," he said, "was angered when he met You below." It was angered because it was abolished. It was angered because it was mocked. It was angered because it was slain. It was angered because it was shackled. It received a body and encountered God. It took earth and came face to face with heaven. It took what it saw and fell by what it could not see. Death, where is your sting? Hades, where is your victory? Christ is risen and you are overthrown. Christ is risen and demons have fallen. Christ is risen and angels rejoice. Christ is risen and life rules. Christ is risen and not one dead remains in the tomb. For Christ, having risen from the dead, has become the firstfruits of those that slept. To Him be the glory and the dominion, forever. Amen.



Father Stanley S. Harakas



The Resurrection of Christ is the one of the most important and central aspects of our Orthodox Christian faith.

In three of the Gospels, an event is described in which Jesus Himself was challenged by the leading Sadducees, who rejected belief in the resurrection. Jesus countered their denials with an affirmation of resurrection (Mark

12:18-27); Matthew 22:23-33; Luke 20:27-40), saying, "You are quite wrong!" (Mark 12:27).

In John 5:29 Christ taught that "those who have done good, (will come) to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment. Elsewhere He declared, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live" (John 11:25).



So, on the third day after His Crucifixion and death, Jesus Himself became the victor over death, sin, evil and the Devil, by conquering death through His Resurrection. The

biblical words are still powerful and striking: "He is not here; for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. Lo, I have told you" (Matthew 28:6-7). It was the first sermon of the Church – "He has risen from the dead!"

Later, when Judas had to be replaced among the Twelve Apostles, one of the conditions of his replacement was that the candidate "must become with us a witness to His resurrection" (Acts 1:22). At Pentecost, St. Peter proclaimed the Resurrection of Christ:

"This Jesus, God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses" (Acts 2:32). The Apostles began their preaching by "proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead" (Acts 4:2). We learn that the preaching on the central importance of Christ's Resurrection continued in the Church: "With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all" (Acts 4:33).

In Saint Paul's apostolic ministry, the Resurrection of Christ was central. In describing his message to the Christians in Rome, of greatest significance was his preaching of Christ, who was the "Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 1:4).

When some of the Christians in Corinth raised doubts about the resurrection of the dead, St. Paul responded with a vehement argument:

"Now if Christ is preached as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that

the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied. But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep"(1 Corinthians 15:12-19).



So it is, that St. Peter declared this core affirmation of the Christian faith when he wrote "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3).

In our Orthodox Church, the Resurrection of Christ is central, especially in worship. Every Sunday is

