



Paschal Epistle of the Ruling Hierarchy of the Western American Diocese

*“The angel cried unto her that is full of grace:
O Pure Virgin, rejoice, and again, I say rejoice;
for Thy Son hath risen from the grave on the third day...”
Paschal Matins – 9th Irmos*

CHRIST IS RISEN!

Christ's Resurrection is an indescribable joy! On Pascha we feel the weight of this temporal life, for a brief moment, and then purged from our souls and replaced with the love of Christ for us. Let us reminisce of how on the Day of Resurrection we do not feel any negativity towards each other, but only brotherly love, compassion and care towards each other - former adversaries become comrades; competitors turn into friends; strangers become acquaintances. Our Lord and Saviour's Glorious Victory over death means not only that death no longer has dominion over us, but also we begin to personally experience the love that radiates from God towards all Creation. It is only through this bond of love of God towards us that we can explain how Christ's suffering and crucifixion can be turned into something beautiful and uplifting.

The Mother of God exemplifies this manifested beauty Christ's Resurrection has to offer to man. What angst she went through as she saw her Son accused. By Holy Tradition she, along with Apostle John, saw from a distance Christ's trial before the Sanhedrin. She witnessed the disciples scatter and Peter's denial. Before Christ's crucifixion she ran and appealed for clemency for her Beloved Son before Pilate, but we know that her mother's cries fell on deaf ears. Knowing deep in her heart that her Son, as the Christ, must suffer for the sake of man's redemption (as St. Symeon foretold). Without shedding a tear, the Mother of God stood stoically witnessing her Son on the Cross and His last breaths. While He bodily rested in the tomb, the Holy Fathers say she kept prayerful vigil knowing that her Son's promise of "arising on the third day" (Matt. 17:23) would be fulfilled. For her faithfulness she was rewarded to first hear of the joyous news of Christ's Resurrection from the angel, and to be visited by her Son, in His Resurrected Body, before any of the Myrrh-bearing Women or the disciples. With this blessed news of the Resurrection any pain, suffering or enmity toward her Son's accusers and weak disciples vanished "as wax melteth before fire" (Ps. 67:3). It is because of the radiant love of the Resurrection that the Theotokos continues to be our Heavenly Mother and intercessor.

Beloved in Christ, let us take example from our Lady Theotokos, and keep that flame of love, fueled by Christ's Resurrection, burning in our hearts year around. Let us forgive and forget all enmity in the spirit of the Resurrection, and let us always kindle the flame of love for Christ, His Holy Church and each other so that we can feel the Resurrection all the days of our life and honestly express:

TRULY HE IS RISEN!