

PASCHAL ENCYCLICAL 2016

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THEODOROS II

BY THE GRACE OF GOD POPE AND PATRIARCH OF ALEXANDRIA AND ALL
AFRICA TO THE PLENITUDE OF OUR APOSTOLIC AND PATRIARCHAL
THRONE GRACE AND MERCY AND PEACE FROM OUR RISEN LORD AND GOD
AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST

“I became poor for you; I became a beggar for you; I was
crucified for you; I was buried for you; in heaven I pray to
the Father for you; I was sent to earth by the Father as an
intercessor for you”.

My dear brothers and sisters,

With these words John Chrysostom describes both the manner and the purpose of God's salvific intervention in human history. The Son of God came down to earth to offer heaven to mankind. The Son of God became man to restore the relationship which the fall from Paradise had broken. The Son of God communed with human nature to bring an end to the exile from the Garden of Eden and to invite us to His Kingdom.

In the person of Jesus Christ we saw the Only one who has nothing to gain from us. The Only one who will never abandon us , however many times we disappoint Him, as long as we seek Him again. The Only one from whom we need hide nothing because He knows everything. The Only one who left us the precious legacy of His Body and Blood so that everyone can commune and receive strength in their struggles and to become not only excellent among men, but God by Grace. And although we know, not theoretically but by Revelation, that He was crucified and suffered for us, rose for us and guided us to the heavens, we hesitate to stretch out our hands to journey together with Him away from the Hades of our lives.

And even though we know that the Son of God came to our world, to the work of His hands, to reconcile the Creator with His creation, we continue to turn our backs on Him who affectionately waits. And even though we do everything possible to heal our bodies, a corruptible reality, we are indifferent to our souls, a reality that will never die.

It is this indifference for our souls, this breath of God within our earthly nature, that triggers the instability and the insecurity that we experience daily. For if we were concerned about our souls, we would apply the commandment of love, the core commandment of the New Testament, that contract that we signed with God. We would feed the hungry, we would quench the thirst of the thirsty, we would host everyone in need, we would soothe the pain of the sick, we would visit those in prison.

In other words, we would remain in Christ, because we would remain in us. However, in the place of us, we put I. We made Revelation a religion and faith a struggle for our own personal salvation. Instead of sharing, loving and communing with our fellow people's pain, we showed indifference for the injustice inflicted on our fellow people and we tolerated the hypocrisy of many people. We limited the will of God to our personal relations with Him and did not spread it throughout our lives in the community of mankind.

Yet, even now when the body of mankind is seriously ill, we should keep alive our hope in the Lord. As long as we activate the cells of love in a body that is infected by the dangerous virus of hatred. Hatred for one who has a different colour, religion, language, ideology from ours. Hatred which transforms the God of love and peace into a punitive and revengeful God. That hatred which does not call on the God of Creation, who lives in the world and for the salvation of His world, but a spiteful God who sanctifies the annihilation of His creation.

My dear brothers and sisters,

As St Kosmas the Aetolian said, whatever good we do – fasting, prayers, charity – but have hatred for our brothers or sisters, every good thing we did is in vain. Therefore, even as we put a small amount of yeast in one hundred kilos of flour, and this has enough strength to relieve as much dough as there is, so too in the flour of hatred let us add some of the yeast of love in Christ. This has so much power that it will relieve the pain and the despair of this world.

Christ is Risen!

THEODOROS II,

† Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa

In the Great City of Alexandria

Holy Pascha 2016