

PATRIARCHAL MESSAGE FOR THE EASTER 2015

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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**

“But God shows His love for us in that while we were yet sinners,
Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8)

My beloved brothers and sisters,

God intervened in history in the person of His Son, who assumed human nature with the aim of renewing and deifying it. He took on race, ethnicity, language and tradition, not to cancel them out, but to give them new meaning and new value. He overcame barriers of race and religion, He spoke with the Samaritans, and He gave a hand to the pagans. He called on his disciples to step out of the boundaries of Judea and to teach all Nations.

In the person of Jesus Christ man saw the providence, the justice and the love of God. Through Christ, man was able to rediscover the truth of his existence. Through Christ, who gave, shared, loved, communed with the pain of others, reacted to injustice, criticized hypocrisy. Through Christ, who extended a hand of help and salvation to the downtrodden, the outcasts, to all those variously cursed on earth.

Certainly it is one thing for man to know the truth and another to put it into practice. Even though man has the opportunity, through the example of Christ, to transform the world from a sum of grains of sand into an organic sum of cells, he is not taking the opportunity to do so. Even though man is created to become a person from just an individual, he has difficulty in seeing the image of his God in others. Even though man saw himself in Jesus Christ as perfect and eternal, he still continues to selfishly pose himself as the standard and not the God man.

People of our times selfishly wish to bring God to their standards. They enlist God to serve ideologies. They recruit God so that the so-called only truth can dominate at the expense of every other. They call on God to impose the absurd doctrine of "opposing force with force". They transform the benevolent God of compassion and peace into a man-hating God of retribution and vengeance. They show God as consecrating the dialect of arms against the dialect of words. They struggle to alter the DNA of human civilization which is none other than the truth that God lives in the world and for the salvation of His world.

This perversion divides the world. On the one hand, the West often faces faith in God as a private matter and deifies freedom of expression, even if this leads to contempt of another's faith. It forgets that faith in God does not simply solve metaphysical questions but, as the way and the life, it embraces all aspects of human society. On the other hand the East at times slips into the repulsive mantle of fundamentalism. It converts faith in God into malevolent religion, hampering the peaceful and fraternal coexistence between people.

Amongst these clashing approaches, Orthodoxy needs to show its own way of life, which is founded on the example of Christ Himself. Christ who opened His embrace not to the

self-righteous Pharisee, but to the repentant tax collector. Christ who conversed with such clemency with His own betrayer at the Last Supper. Christ who on the Cross accepted the thief first into paradise. Christ who suffered and rose again so that man would not be only creation, but also God by grace.

My dear brothers and sisters,

Nature may have taught us the law of the prevalence of the most powerful species. However the Lord taught us to see in ourselves and in others the image of God. This image is the establishment of heaven on earth. This image reflects in the face of others the agony of Christ who continues to suffer. This image reflects the undying hope that love can become again the makings of history.

Christ is risen!

THEODOROS II

Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa

In the Great City
of Alexandria
Holy Pascha 2015