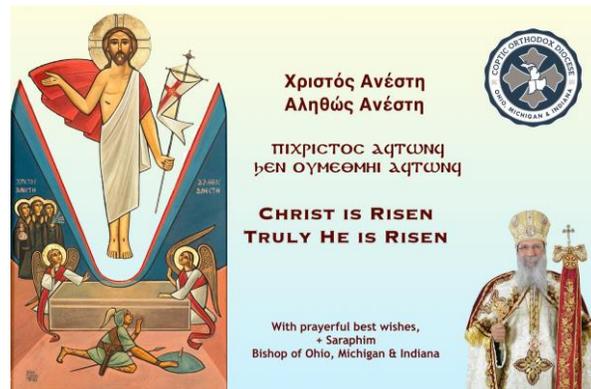




**COPTIC ORTHODOX PATRIARCHATE OF ALEXANDRIA
DIOCESE OF OHIO, MICHIGAN & INDIANA**



April 2020

In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. One God, Amen.

May God's grace and blessing be upon us now and forever, Amen.
Ekchristos Anesti. Alithos Anesti. Christ is Risen. Truly He is Risen.

We spent Great Lent and Holy Week witnessing God's love and care for us and His plan for the salvation of our souls.

This year specifically, during most of Great Lent and Holy Week, our houses became churches and the hearts of the believers became altars. All people cried to the Lord supplicating from Him how to live a life filled with His support, comfort, and peace.

On the Feast of the Glorious Resurrection, I would like to contemplate with you that the glorious resurrection is against gravity and the laws of nature. The laws of nature tell us that whatever falls from on high cannot be sent back. For example, rain comes from above and it is sent to serve humanity and it cannot be sent back. But, the One Who is able to reconnect Earth with heaven once more is God alone.

God the Pantocrator placed the law of gravity and He is the creator of heaven and earth. Our Lord Jesus Christ says, "no one can come to Me unless the Father Who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:44). This is why we need God to pull us above towards Him.

We know that "we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come" (Hebrews 13:14). We recall the words of HH Pope Shenouda III, God repose his soul, "And because we know that the body is temporal, then it must bear fruitful deeds". We cry out every day the words in the Lord's



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Prayer, “Your Kingdom come”, but how can the kingdom come without Him pulling us towards Him even with our hands raised and our hearts crying out to Him? We need Him to pull us towards Him. In St. John, Christ also says, “And I if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself” (John 12:32). You, God are the Only One Who is capable. In the end of the Creed, we pray daily with hearts full of hope, “we look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the coming age, Amen.” But, Whom is the One Who grants us the coming age and prepares a place for us? We need Him to draw us up towards Him.

We are amazed at the conversation Christ had with His disciples in St. John, “no one has ascended to heaven but He Who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man Who is in heaven” (John 3:13). Also, St. James in his epistle confirms, “every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father of lights with Whom there is no variation or shadow of turning” (James 1:17). We implore you O Lord and cry out with Job the Righteous as he was in his tribulation, “nor is there any mediator between us, Who may lay his hand on us both” (Job 9:33). And as St. Paul says, “and without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifested in the flesh” (1 Timothy 3:16). God, the solution was Your incarnation and taking flesh because You are the mediator between us and the Father. My Lord Jesus Christ, You placed Your hands on mankind through Your incarnation while You are One in essence with the Father. In (1 Samuel 2:25), he says, “but if a man sins against the Lord, Who will intercede for him?” We sinned against You, O Lord; who will intercede on our behalf? We need a mediator to place his hands on us! So You broke down the wall of enmity so we can come to You and You brought us into Your bosom. “Come now, and let us reason together,” says the Lord, “though your sins are scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18); this is a great promise that You, our God only can give us. Inviting us to come without being scared, He says in (Deuteronomy 1:17), “you shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small as well as the great; you shall not be afraid in any man’s presence, for the judgement is God’s. The case that is too hard for you bring to me, and I will hear it”. We come to You after Great Lent and after we witnessed Your unconditional love for us hour by hour during Holy Week, we plead You to hear us, for all we want is You, God, and Your Kingdom.

St. Paul describes the phrase, “who may lay his hand on us both” that is referenced in (Job 9:33) in (1 Timothy 2:5-6), “for there is one God and one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus, Who gave Himself a ransom for all to be testified in due time.” And in (Hebrews 9:14-15), St. Paul says, “how much more shall the blood of Christ, Who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this reason, He is the Mediator of the new covenant...that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance”.



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Teach us O Lord how to properly accept and learn the ministry of reconciliation! You fulfilled the Economy in the flesh on our behalf for our sakes, and we too have the responsibility of fully appreciating Your work, Your will, and Your plan in our lives. You trampled down our enemy under our feet; and as we say in the Resurrection Hymn, “Ekchristos Anesti”, “He trampled down death upon His death and upon those in the tombs bestowing life.” What remains is our submission to Your will and as we pray in the Lord’s Prayer, “Your will be done” in our lives, our minds, and our hearts, God, as it is in heaven.

God, You said, “now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:18). We say with St. Paul, “be reconciled back to God.”

We ask you God on this Feast of Your Holy Resurrection, O You Whose precepts, laws, and commands are against those of nature while Your infinite love is unimagined and cannot be explained, let us thank God for what He has given us that is more than we can think or imagine. We pray that You raise our hearts and minds, so that not only Your glorious and Holy Resurrection is seen with our eyes, but that we may rise with You. You defeated Satan, our enemy. We worship You every day so that we may abide in You and You in us.

May God renew for us these blessed and joyous days upon us, in peace at all times and we pray to God our Good Savior to preserve for us the life of our Honored Father the Patriarch, Pope Tawadros II for many years and peaceful times, and all the metropolitans, the bishops, and the reverend fathers of the church, the servants, and all the congregation. May God protect the world in peace from all plagues, pestilences, pandemics, and all fearsome events, and may He grant everyone peace, love, good health, and comfort. May He open the doors of the churches before the believers. We worship and glorify Your name and we live for You, through You, and in You.

Ekchristos Anesti. Alithos Anesti.

My love and my prayers to you, my sons and daughters, of the Diocese of Ohio, Michigan, and Indiana.

Remember me in your prayers and you are always in my prayers and in my heart.

With love and respect,

+ Saraphim
Bishop of Ohio, Michigan, and Indiana