

## Papal Message for the Feast of Resurrection, April 2004

Contributed by H.H. Pope Shenouda III  
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My beloved children in the lands of immigration, Priests and Congregation.

It gives me great pleasure to congratulate you on the Feast of the Resurrection of Christ, to whom is glory; and to rejoice with you in His resurrection, just as His saintly disciples rejoiced, and no one will take away their joy from them. (John 16:22)

The crucifixion day was sorrowful and painful from the psychological side, even if it was a day of salvation from the theological side. People did not see in it except pain, reviling, insults, scourging and nails!! They did not see the amazing salvation, nor did they see the opening of the door of paradise and the transfer of the departed to there on the hope (of the resurrection). The disciples were terrified, but when they saw the Lord in His resurrection, they rejoiced for they saw Him alive outside the tomb. They rejoiced in meeting Him, for He has become triumphant in His battle against vanity and that He will lead them in the procession of His triumph. (II Corinthians 2:14) They rejoiced for they have rid themselves from the smugness of their enemies, as they were also saved from their worry, concerns and hiding. They were able to go out and face the situation, and speak with all power and boldness about the resurrection of the Lord. And that the Cross was not the end of the story, but the end was the joy of the resurrection.

The resurrection of the Lord was the turning point in the history of Christianity. They rejoiced that the resurrection is possible. Their fear changed to courage and boldness as well as apathy to all the powers that resist the word of God. Thus, after the resurrection, St. Peter was able to say "we ought to obey God rather than men." (Acts 5:29)

In the spirit of the resurrection, they no longer feared. The most their enemies can do is threaten them with death. What is the value of threatening to kill to the one who believes in the resurrection and has seen it?

With this, Christianity has believed that death is a mere departure, and that it is a gain, as St. Paul said "having a desire to depart and be with Christ which is far better" (Philippians 1:23)... "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain." (Philippians 1:21)

With the resurrection, they felt that they are in the shadow of a mighty God. He is the Lord of the resurrection and life. He who believes in Him, though he may die, he shall live. (John 11:25) They rejoiced that the Lord had fulfilled His promise to them that He will arise and they will see Him. They also trusted in the fulfillment of all His other promises.

In the joy of the disciples in the resurrection, they also rejoiced in all pain they received for the sake of witnessing to the resurrection. Pain now has a new understanding in their thoughts and feelings.

Pain, in their conviction, is now the road to glory, just as in what happened to Christ in His crucifixion; saying, "if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together." (Romans 8:17)

By the resurrection, the Cross has become a crown and glory, and even a symbol as well. The resurrection gave Christians hope in the after life, so they preached it with all their desire. In the joy of the resurrection, they rejoiced in the kingdom that follows; and in the eternal joy and all that it contains, as the Lord explained in the Book of Revelation - glories for the victorious, which they will receive after the resurrection.

The resurrection gave us hope in the eternal fellowship with Christ. The joy of the resurrection is not merely to rise, but the importance is to rise with Christ, and live with Him where He is (John 17:2) as He promised saying, "I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." (John 14:3)

With the joy of the disciples in the resurrection, they rejoiced that they are His disciples and His own and that they belong to Him. They rejoiced that He visited them after the resurrection, and breathed on them and said "receive the Holy Spirit..." (John 20:22) They rejoiced that He entrusted them with a message, that He spent with them forty days speaking to them about matters pertaining to the Kingdom of God (Acts 1:3), and that He promised them that He will be with them always, even to the end of the age. (Matthew 28:20)

They rejoiced in the glorified body of the resurrection, and that the Lord will "transform our lowly body that it may be confirmed to His glorious body." (Philippians 3:21)

For all this, rejoice my beloved children in the resurrection of the Lord Christ, and all its glories, as our fathers the apostles, the disciples of Christ, rejoiced.

May this Feast be a source of continual joy for you. May your joy be spiritual in the Lord. A blessed season to you all.

Be well in the Lord, absolved from His Holy Spirit.

Shenouda III  
Pope of Alexandria & Patriarch of the See of St. Mark