

Papal Message for the Feast of Resurrection, April 2009

Contributed by H.H. Pope Shenouda III
Monday, 20 April 2009
Last Updated Monday, 20 April 2009

My beloved children in the lands of immigration, clergy and laity.

Peace and grace to you from the Lord. My greetings to you on the Glorious Feast of Resurrection. The Resurrection of the Lord offers to us beneficial lessons that we will not forget.

The first lesson is that there is no impossible, and everything is possible with God.

The second lesson is that the Lord Christ, in His Resurrection, was always working for our sake. Firstly, He removed the feelings of fear and doubt that troubled the disciples. He comforted them and planted in them the power of faith. Then He granted them the grace of the priesthood. And He said to these disciples: "As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." (Luke 20:21) He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." (Luke 20:21-22) Likewise, He pledged to the disciples mission work and teaching and said to them: "preach the gospel to every creature." (Mark 16:15) He also said: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them... teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you..." (Matthew 28:19-20) He also stayed with them for forty days "speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." (Acts 1:3) During this period, He delivered to them what we received through Apostolic Tradition; the most important of this is what pertains to the sacraments and order of the Church.

In His Resurrection and appearance to them, He changed them from fear to being bold, so they were able to say to the Jewish leaders at that time: "We ought to obey God rather than men." (Acts 5:29). He explained to them all that related to Him in the Mosaic law, the Prophets and the Psalms.

After He left them and ascended to heaven, He sent them the Holy Spirit as tongues of fire that rested upon them, so they were able to preach in His name amongst all the nations. After this, He also granted them many gifts from the Holy Spirit which helped them in the work of mission and pastoral care. He did not suffice with this, but said to them: "I am with you always, even to the end of the age..." (Matthew 28:20).

After a period of time from His ascension, He appeared to Saul of Tarsus who was persecuting the Church; and He was able to change him to an Apostle - one of the greatest apostles who "laboured more abundantly than they all..." (1 Corinthians 15:10).

And the Lord Christ who worked with His disciples after the Resurrection, is still working until now in His Church. This is through His grace and the work of His Holy Spirit. Did He not say: "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working." (John 5:17) We thank Him for all that He has done with us; for He is the One who encourages us by saying: "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:20).

From all this, we see in the Resurrection and work of the Lord an encouragement to us to work; and He works with us. How beautiful is the saying about the Disciples of Christ, at the end of the Gospel of St. Mark: "And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs." (Mark 16:20).

In conclusion, every blessing from the Lord to you all, and be absolved from His Holy Spirit.

Signed
His Holiness Pope Shenouda III
Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark
April, 2009