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His Holiness Pope Tawadros II
Pope of Alexandria and
Patriarch of the See of St. Mark
The Papal Center



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The Papal Encyclical of the Glorious Feast of the Resurrection, 2017

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, one God. Amen.

Ekchristos Anesti, Alithos Anesti. Christ is risen. Truly, He is risen.

I congratulate you for the Glorious Feast of Resurrection. This year, all Christians worldwide are celebrating it in unisons. We remember the martyrs of Palm Sunday. With their blood, they recorded a new page in the history of our Egyptian Coptic Orthodox Church. We remember them with all goodness as the Lord had chosen them. We know that God is the Pantocrator. He governs all our lives. We always thank Him saying 'let us give thanks to the beneficent one.' We remember them with all the martyrs. We remember our beloved country Egypt entreating the Lord to keep her in all peace. May He remove all evil and shadows of evil from the borders of our country Egypt, and of all the regions of the Middle East.

When we meditate on the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, we find in the Holy Bible many verses concerning the resurrection. The resurrection is the first and main event in the history of our Christianity. Without resurrection or the cross, Christianity could not exist. One of the many verses that discuss the resurrection in a personal perspective was written by a saint who had not known Christ for a long time, perhaps until middle age. In his adulthood, Christ had appeared to him and introduced Himself. This encounter changed him from Saul of Tarsus to St. Paul the Apostle. In his epistle to the Philippians, while in the prison, he wrote one of the strongest verses about experiencing the resurrection in chapter 3, verse 10. 'That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.' (Philippians 3: 10). This knowledge and spiritual experience of the resurrection is illustrated through four features by St. Paul.

First: 'That I may know Him'. This is a confirmatory statement. This knowledge is personal and not by hearsay. This knowledge is through experiencing Christ personally. To verify this, he said 'That I may know Him'. Job the righteous spoke about this knowledge at the conclusion of the book of Job saying: "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You." (Job 42: 5). Through this knowledge man knows the love of Christ, the commandments of Christ, the salvation of Christ, the behavior of Christ which He placed in our hearts. This knowledge is by experience.

Second: "And the power of His resurrection". This is the second feature St. Paul mentioned. The resurrection has a power. This power is stronger than anything. The resurrection is not a historical event but a functional status for man to live by, experience and enjoy. The resurrection confirms that death is not the end of the road. It was the resurrection that raised Mary Magdalene when she was in doubt. While in her sadness, she thought that Christ was the gardener. When He called her by name, she joyfully greeted Him.

The resurrection alleviated the disciples from their fear. They had been terrified and kept all doors shut. When the Lord Jesus Christ appeared to them, the Bible says: 'Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.' (John 20: 20). Resurrection raises man from sin. Man cannot rise from the impurity of sin except by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ that pleased all mankind when He was crucified and died on the cross for the sake of all.

Third: 'And the fellowship of His sufferings'. This is the third feature in the experience of St. Paul. Here we wonder why he mentioned the power of resurrection before the fellowship of His sufferings. In ancient Christian tradition, whenever the cross was hung, they did not depict the body of the Lord Jesus. The reason being that Christ had risen from the dead. The joy of the resurrection is a road through the cross. But Christ is risen now. I remember during one of my visits abroad; I saw a wooden cross with the resurrected Jesus portrayed. Christ is present with the body that resurrected from the dead. 'The fellowship of His sufferings' that is described by St. Paul means that resurrection comes after suffering. The fellowship of sufferings happens when man shares it. There is no glory without pain. There is no crown of life without the crown of thorns. The crown of thorns gave us the crown of life. There is no resurrection without the cross. That is why we go through the fellowship of suffering as human beings and as a church. We describe many of these accounts in the narratives and events of the martyrs. Our Egyptian Coptic Orthodox Church became the "Church of Martyrs" and is renowned by this name worldwide. That is why we say: "The Mother of the Martyrs is so beautiful" meaning the church.

Fourth: 'being conformed to His death'. This is the fourth feature of St. Paul's experience. It means a Christian person treading the path of the Lord, dies of sin. In every liturgy we attend, we hear the conclusion of the Catholic Epistle that says: "Do not love the world or the things in the world" (1 John 2: 15). The focus of a Christian and his heart's desire is continuously towards heaven. 'Being conformed to His death' is clarified by St. Paul in his strong spiritual experiences: "For your sake we are killed all day long." (Romans 8: 36). This spiritual experience written by St. Paul was expressed by the saint several times. He states: "Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light." (Ephesians 5: 14). He gives light to the person who sleeps in sin, or in evil, or sleeps in the love of the world, away from Christ and from the true knowledge of Christ. The person who sleeps does not know the resurrection of Christ, neither experiencing nor living it. St. Paul through the holy words, says: "Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, death of the sin, and Christ will give you light."

My heartfelt congratulations to all. Our hearts ache with pain for the separation of our loved ones the martyrs, but we always remember that they have fallen asleep on the hope of the resurrection. The resurrection of Christ. May God preserve and bless your lives. My message is directed to the fathers the metropolitans, bishops, priests, hegumens and presbyters, to all deacons, ministers, servants, committees of churches and church boards, to all youth, and to all children. To each family in every congregation in our Coptic Church extending to all the continents of the world. In America, Canada, Latin America, Europe, Africa, Asia and Australia.

My greetings and love along with the love of the mother church here in Egypt, we send to you. May you always enjoy the resurrection in your life. Ekhristos Anisty, Alithos Anisty. Christ is risen. Truly, He is risen.

Amadra II