

PASCHAL ENCYCLICAL 2018

Ref. No: 49/2018

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

"You killed the author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses" (Acts 3:15)

My dear brothers and sisters,

The Apostles testify and the world celebrates. The Apostles confess and the world rejoices. The Apostles assert and the world believes. That truly the Creator of our life is risen. That truly the Author of our life is risen.

That truly the Renovator of our life is risen. Nonetheless, can the light of the Resurrection overcome the thickening darkness of human history? Can the message of the Resurrection freely reach out to every one of our brothers and sisters in Christ, to every person of good will? Or does the Prophet still wonder: *"Have we not all one father? Has not one God created us? Why then are we faithless to one another?"* (Malachi 2:10).

When God created us, He did so voluntarily. And when He re-created us through His Only Son, He did so without us offering anything in advance. However, the Kingdom of God, in other words our union with God, will only occur if we desire God; only if we seek God; only if we existentially set as our first priority the will of God.

The Apostolic faith concerning God's will is clear: *"I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right."* (Acts 10:34-35). Entering the Kingdom of God only requires the fear of God as a respect for His will, and the righteousness of God as the fruit of His will.

What do we do? We set aside the fear of God. We consider the fear of God to supposedly discredit our ego. Moreover we distort God's righteousness. We see it through the deforming lenses of nation, race, color, or diversity. And we come to the point of burying under successive layers of elements of identity the one and only element that unites us all: our common origin from God.

We forget that a Samaritan man became the model of compassionate philanthropy. We forget that a Samaritan woman became the model of heartfelt alteration. We forget that a prostitute became the model of saving repentance. We forget that the thief of the eleventh hour became the first inhabitant of Paradise. We forget that the only distinction that should exist on a human level is the one that distinguishes our brothers and sisters as those who are self-sufficient and those who are in need of help.

My dear brothers and sisters,

Today as we celebrate the Resurrection of the Lord and open our homes to share our joy, let us keep in mind the will of God. Christ said: *"When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind and you will be blessed"*. (Luke 14:12-14).

Why should we invite all those people in need? Our holy predecessor, the Patriarch of tangible love, St John the Merciful, gave the answer: *'For indeed they can help us inherit the Kingdom of Heaven.'* It is not just that our brothers and sisters need us. We have a much greater need of them, because our brothers and sisters who are in need hold the keys of Paradise.

It is with this faith that we walk through the Africa of the nations, the Africa of the tribes, the Africa of diverse cultures. Not with the faith of the intellect, but with the faith of the heart. Not with ideological faith, but with humanistic faith. Not with faith that shows favoritism, but with the faith that in the person of every brother or sister we meet in Africa, in the Continent of hope, Christ may be hidden, the Author of Life!

Christ is Risen!

† THEODOROS II

POPE AND PATRIARCH OF ALEXNADRIA AND ALL AFRICA

In the Great City of Alexandria Pascha 2018