

PASCHAL MESSAGE 2014

Prot. No.40/2014

THEODOROS II

BY THE GRACE OF GOD POPE AND PATRIARCH OF ALEXANDRIA

AND ALL AFRICA TO THE FULNESS

OF OUR APOSTOLIC AND PATRIARCHAL THRONE

GRACE AND MERCY AND PEACE FROM OUR RISEN LORD

AND GOD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST

My dear brothers and sisters,

Through sheer goodness, God called mankind into being and formed him according to His image. Mankind was enriched with the gift of the rational soul, so as to control beings and to acquire scientific knowledge. Mankind was endowed with pure soul, in which the kingdom of God was reflected and the path to the knowledge of God and salvation was imprinted.

When mankind, making a bad choice in his freedom, turned away from God and conformed to evil, the supremely benevolent God did not abandon him. Instead, *"our transgression of the Word called on the philanthropy so that the Lord could appear to mankind"* (Athanasios the Great, *Regarding the Incarnation of the Word*, 1). Through the Incarnation of His Son, God restored the beauty of the rational soul and renewed His image in man.

Through His Cross and His Resurrection, our Savior Jesus Christ made man once again receptor of divinity. He gave mankind something even greater than creation, adoption. Mankind was endowed with the ability to become a son of God by grace. However he retained in entirety his freedom to accept or reject the divine gift. Since then the use of mankind's free will at times illuminates and at others obscures his path to deification and salvation.

In our times one the most appalling forms of tarnishing the image of God in mankind, is terrorism. The systematic use or the threat of the use of violence, over and above every boundary of logic and sense, shocks, spreads panic, removes human lives. The fostering of insecurity in the souls of human beings trivializes the truth of life and invalidates communion with others as images of God. Existence ceases to be experienced as coexistence; survival ceases to be realized as cohabitation. Becoming in the likeness of God resembles utopia, crushed by the

pressure of fear.

And while God, as creator and re-creator of human nature, defined freedom as an act of love and responsibility, the terrorist misrepresents freedom as loveless arbitrariness. He does not do what he wants to, assuming the burden of his responsibilities and paying the cost of the acts of his free choice. On the contrary, he does as he pleases, burdening his fellows with the consequences of his choices.

The rational flock of the Patriarchate of Alexandria and all Africa often experiences the irrationality of terrorism. The Church of Alexandria denounces terrorism as a dead locked expression of moral complicity of ideology with violence. It promotes as an infallible indicator Him who did not offer us ideologies, but rather through His life and death embodied freedom as respect for others and love as the ultimate sacrifice. It retains ineradicable its faith in God's condescension, who *"so loved the world that He gave his only-begotten Son"* (John 3:16). It benevolently works for the ejection of the blind instinct of terrorist violence from the human soul and the restoration of the human soul as a dwelling place of God.

My dear brothers and sisters,

Ministering my fellow human beings in Africa all these years, I have learned that if mankind can be taught to hate, mankind can more easily be taught to love. This is proper, since love was instilled by God in our souls at the beginning of mankind's historic journey. And do not forget this: man can say no to God, but God never says no to man and He never stops waiting for us to freely respond to His call!

Christ is Risen!

THEODOROS II

Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa

In the Great City of Alexandria

Holy Pascha 2014