



METROPOLIS OF
SAN FRANCISCO

“Instantly, grief was turned to joy.”

Saint Romanos the Melodist
Kontakion for the Resurrection

Beloved in the Lord,

The witness of the Holy Scriptures is clear. The women disciples went to the tomb expecting to anoint the body of their Teacher. Their despair was obvious. They had followed their beloved Master for three years, accepted His message of God’s love, and witnessed His miracles and compassion for all. After His arrest and trial they saw Him carry His cross to Golgotha to His execution. They grieved at His burial. And now, three days later, they find an empty tomb. They learn that their Teacher has risen from the dead and instantly their grief turns to joy.

This was not a spiritual resurrection or some kind of imaginary event. It was real; it was physical. Christ’s body was gone. **“Do not be amazed; you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen, He is not here; see the place where they laid Him”** (Mark 16:6), the angel proclaimed to the women. Soon all His disciples would see Him, talk with Him, and eat with Him. Thomas would touch Him. But even in this physical reality, the resurrected Christ was transformed. He showed the marks of His Passion, but He was no longer subject to the ordinary laws of nature, to the human limitations of time and space. His identity as the Son of God was now evident to all with the eyes of their belief. And when we consider this reality, we will repeat the words of Thomas to the Risen Christ, **“My Lord and my God”**.

Even though we know the story, we gather in our parishes the night of Pascha with anticipation. We are tired at the lateness of the hour. Attending the many services of Holy Week has added to our fatigue. We have heightened our observance of the fast these last few days, also contributing to our weariness. Yet, even as we sit in the darkness, hearing the hymns of lament, there is excitement in the air. Then, all the lights are extinguished. Suddenly a lit candle comes forth and the priest proclaims **“Come receive the light . . . (Δεῦτε λάβετε φῶς . . .)”** Darkness and despair have been overcome by the Resurrection of Christ. In an instant, our fatigue is gone and joy fills the church.

Theological arguments cannot explain this joy. Only the impossible, unprecedented proclamation, **“Christ is risen from the dead, by death trampling down upon death, and to those in the tombs He has granted life.”** has the power to convert us and fill our hearts with such happiness. All the social media posts of red eggs, candle-filled churches, or Paschal flowers cannot substitute for the experience of witnessing light triumph over darkness, of the Son of God defeating death. One must be there – rather one must be here – in the community of faith to experience this moment.

While this joy will fill our parishes and our family celebrations, the power of the Resurrection becomes more evident when we allow the light of Christ to overcome any darkness in our lives. As we sung throughout Holy Week, **“O Giver of light, make radiant the vesture of my soul and save me (λάμπρυνόν μου τὴν στολὴν τῆς ψυχῆς, Φωτοδότα καὶ σῶσον με)**. Sharing the light of the Resurrection with our neighbors through our acts of philanthropy, charity, kindness, justice, and service is more convincing than even the beauty of our lit candles. When we tell and retell the story of the experience of the women disciples’ grief turning to joy to our children, our grandchildren, and to all we encounter, we, like them so many centuries ago, can rejoice and worship the Resurrected Christ.

May the Joy of the Resurrection be with you and your beloved families today and always.

Christ Is Risen! Truly He Is Risen!

With Paternal Love in the Resurrected Lord,


✠ GERASIMOS
Metropolitan of San Francisco