



# THE PASCHAL MESSAGE OF HIS EMINENCE MARK, ARCHBISHOP OF BERLIN, GERMANY AND GREAT BRITAIN

*This is the Day of Resurrection! Let us be illumined, O people. The Passover, the Passover of the Lord! For Christ has led us from death to life and from earth to heaven, as we sing the song of victory.*

On the first day of the Resurrection of Christ, the third day after His death on the Cross, the two disciples going to Emmaus (Lk. 24, 13-33) were still not able to sing our hymn of Paschal victory. They spoke of *all those terrible things*, of the unheard of and never before seen *things which had happened*, which had shaken their world. They believed that their Teacher was not a mere man, but *a Prophet, one mighty in deed and word*, and hoped that He would deliver their earthly homeland from the domination of another people. But they were to witness not His earthly glory, but – from a worldly viewpoint – a shameful and inglorious death on the Cross. They completed their journey as it were outside time, at the watershed of the ages, in the interval between the supposed human absence of glory of the Crucified Christ and the glory – far beyond all human glory – of the Risen Christ. They were troubled and perplexed: they wavered in faith, but also wavered in their lack of faith (Blessed Theophylact). They still did not know that soon He Who of His own will offered Himself in sacrifice on Golgotha said: *All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth...and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen* (Mt. 28, 18-20). This he said in the glory of another life, which we await and to which we are drawn by Him.

While they went thus, engrossed in conversation about Christ, about His *deeds and words*, about their expectation that He would fulfil His promises, the Lord Himself drew near and went with them.

And is it not this way that we too, dear brothers and sisters, have walked during the Great Fast? Have we too not been engrossed during these forty days in conversation about the coming resurrection and immortality? What has the fruit of these conversations been? Has Christ accompanied us? After the repentance that we have offered and long and heartfelt prayer, have we been filled with the assurance of the resurrection of the Saviour, with His resurrecting power and with our Resurrection together with Him?

For us, physically, it is not the third day since the crucifixion of the Lord Christ that has dawned, but the third millennium. And yet we still often act as if we knew nothing of what happened in Jerusalem at that time. Are we ready to invite the Stranger to stay with us? Are we ready to offer Him bread, which He breaks and shares with us? Are we ready to see in Him Christ the Saviour, receiving Him in this bread?

We are far from this state. And the conversations that we have are not at all about what the disciples spoke of. We have only idle talk, with which we sully our mouths and our ears as much as possible, forgetting that we will have to answer at the Last Judgement for every idle word! Yes, perhaps in these coming days we shall exclaim with joy: *Christ is Risen!* Perhaps we shall even go to a few services, filled with Paschal exultation. But that is not enough. Where is the conversation of the apostles? Where is our conversation with the Risen Christ Himself? For without that, He will not come and open our minds *to understand the Scriptures*.

Dear brothers and sisters, all of us in this life are on the road to Emmaus, on the path from absence of faith or little faith to the saving faith. Cleopas and his companion heard from the Lord Himself the explanation of *all the Scriptures concerning Him*. We too have the Holy Scriptures, containing much more than what was in the Scriptures until the time of Christ, we have the Holy Tradition, at sundry times and in divers ways confirming the truthfulness of His promises. It is easier for our hearts to open up and understand everything about Him and by Him. We only need to invite Him in: stay with us. He is ready to dwell in us with all His being, communicating to us all His Divine and human qualities. This is what happened to His disciples: they invited the Stranger to share their meal with Him, but as He broke the bread, they suddenly saw in the Stranger their Teacher and Lord. The eyes of the disciples were opened and their sorrow turned to joy.

We can easily verify this indwelling: *Does not our heart burn within us* when the Lord *talks with us* and *while He opens to us the Scriptures* in His Holy Gospel, in His life-giving good news? If we live according to the Gospel and keep the Lord's Commandments, then our hearts will grow warm through His presence, when in heartfelt prayer *we know Him in the breaking of the bread* in the sacrament of communion.

The Forty Days of Lent should have prepared us for such an understanding. And now, listening to the Paschal hymns, we can see with our inner eyes the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, we can go with them, feeling our hearts burning inside us, we can return with them to Jerusalem and join the Twelve and through them the whole Universal Church, where He will be with us *always, even unto the end of the world*. No doubts shall divert us from this clear and saving path. Let us cast aside everything that prevents us from truly communing with Christ and His Universal Church – every passion and partiality, all our human and worldly thoughts, all our vain, political considerations of the moment. The Kingdom of Christ our God is not of this world and our path leads *from the earth to the heaven, from death to eternal life*, to our Heavenly Home.

Today we take this path in all the recently acquired fullness of Church unity. Let us thank the Lord for His mercies to us the unworthy. *Knowing Him* in the sacraments, *in the breaking of bread*, let us also all together on *this chosen and holy day* sing in Orthodox wise the hymn of our radiant victory: *This is the Day of Resurrection! Let us be illumined, O people. The Passover, the Passover of the Lord! For Christ our God has led us from death to life and from earth to heaven, as we sing the song of victory. Amen.*

+ Archbishop Mark  
Munich-Berlin,  
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