

# Patriarchal Proclamation on Holy Pascha

April 20, 2006

Protocol No. 379

+ B A R T H O L O M E W

by the grace of God Archbishop of Constantinople, New Rome,  
and Ecumenical Patriarch,

To the plentitude of the church,  
Grace, peace and mercy from Christ the Saviour, Risen in Glory

"O life, how can you die? How can you dwell in a tomb?"

Brother concelebrants and pious, God-loving children of the Church, All of Nature, the choirs of angels, the multitudes of humankind: all are astonished and amazed. The entire creation stands in fear and trembling in the presence of the great and unspeakable Mystery of the Holy Passion and the glorious Resurrection of Christ the Savior, and asks: "How is it possible that Life, true Life, Life itself, the source of Life, can die? How can a grave become the dwelling place of Life, of our Lord Jesus Christ Who said of himself, "I am ..... the life" (John 14:6)? The answers are revealed to us in the Resurrection.

Many of the questions asked in days of old remain unanswered today. What happened then, once and for all, is repeated without ceasing. The Mystery continues, as does our wonder. Christ remains for many in our own day "a sign that is spoken against" (Luke 2:34). He is crucified, but He rises to life. The Crucified One remains to some a stumbling block; to others, foolishness (1 Cor 1:23). Some scoff upon hearing of the Resurrected One (Acts 17:32); others slander Him (Matthew 28:11-15); but He reigns in the hearts of the faithful.

We, the faithful, enjoy a foretaste of the Resurrection. We live in the Resurrection, not fearing the physical death of the body because we believe in the Resurrection of Christ and human beings. We experience it as a reality through our fellowship with the Saints who, although they died according to human understanding, in reality live on and communicate with us and help us in our lives.

The shrill voice of fanaticism, however, which rang out then and which has been ringing out unceasingly ever since, continues to cry: "Crucify him, crucify him!" The powerful ones of this world, who answered such cries with cowardice and

denial of responsibility, continue to reply: “Take him yourselves and crucify him” (John 19:6).

Life is risen! Christ is Risen! And we bear witness to His Resurrection not only by offering rational arguments and proofs, but rather by living our lives in accordance with the Resurrection. Only then does our witness become credible, when the Resurrected Christ lives within us, when our entire being radiates the joy, certainty and peace of the Resurrection.

Certainly, our lives and the life of our natural environment remain threatened by death. We do not mean here decay and deterioration in the biological sense, but rather those types of death and destruction brought about suddenly, in cruel and violent ways; ways that challenge our conscience, trivialize the human person, and mangle the beauty of nature.

We mean, among other things, that death which puts an end to human life before it even has the chance to see the light of the sun.

We mean those countless children, who lose their lives because of poverty, hunger, the lack of even the most basic medicine, the cruelty of those who have the power to act, but who do not do what is necessary to save these children, the impudence of the exploiters and corrupters of children’s innocence.

We mean the victims of daily acts of violence, of religious, nationalistic, and racial clashes, as well as the victims of fanaticism and war. Such acts are callously and uncaringly carried out by those who turn deaf ears to humanity’s call for the end of hostilities and the establishment of peace throughout the world.

Finally, we mean the plundering of the natural environment by human beings who, driven by greed and the lust for profit, violently and cunningly subordinate and exploit it. Such conduct not only distorts the beauty of creation given by its Creator but also undermines the foundations and conditions necessary for the survival of future generations.

We mean, in short, those types of life that bear signs of death, be they spiritual or moral, the consequences of disordered passions and errors, deprivation or greed, the trivialization and oppression of life.

Beloved brothers and children in the Lord, we worship once again this year the Holy Passion of our Savior Jesus Christ. We know that the teaching about His

death on the cross remains foolishness for those who remain unbelieving and who go the way of destruction. It is, however, the power of God for us who walk in faith the way of salvation (1 Cor 1:18) in the brilliant light of the Resurrection.

In this power and joy of the Resurrection of Christ, we respect the life of our fellow human beings. We call for an end to the killing of one another, and we denounce the violence and fanaticism that threatens life. The victory of the Resurrection must be experienced as a victory of life, of brotherhood, of the future, of hope.

"Christ is Risen, and life reigns.  
To Him be glory and dominion unto the ages of ages."

Holy Pascha 2006  
+ Bartholomew of Constantinople  
your fervent intercessor of all before the Risen Christ

To be read in Church at the Divine Liturgy of the Feast  
of Holy Pascha, after the reading of the Holy Gospel.