

PATRIARCHAL ENCYCLICAL

Pascha 2011

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

By the Mercy of God

Archbishop of Constantinople-New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch

To the Plenitude of the Church Grace, Peace and Mercy

From the Savior Christ Risen in Glory

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Beloved children in the Lord,

Once again, in a spirit of joy and peace, we address you with the delightful and hopeful greeting: “Christ is Risen!”

The occurrences and events of our time may not seem to justify the exultation of our greeting. The natural destruction caused by seismic tremors and oceanic swells, together with the lurking devastation from possible nuclear explosion, as well as the human sacrifices resulting from military conflict and terrorist action, reveal our world to be in horrible torment and anguish from the pressure of the natural and spiritual forces of evil.

Nevertheless, the Resurrection of Christ is indeed real and grants to faithful Christians the certainty – and to all humanity the possibility – of transcending the adverse consequences of natural calamity and spiritual perversity.

Nature rebels when the arrogant human mind endeavors to tame its boundless forces endowed by the Creator its seemingly insignificant and inactive elements. In considering from a spiritual perspective the grievous natural phenomena that plague our planet repeatedly and successively in recent times, we appreciate and acknowledge the belief that these are inseparable from the spiritual and ethical deviation of humanity. The signs of this deviation – such as greed, avarice, and an insatiable desire for material wealth, alongside an indifference toward the poverty endured by so many as a result of the imbalanced affluence of the few – may not be clearly related to the natural occurrences in the eyes of scientists. Yet, for someone examining the matter spiritually, sin disturbs the harmony of spiritual and natural relations alike. For, there is a mystical connection between moral and natural evil; if we wish to be liberated from the latter, we must reject the former.

Our Risen Lord Jesus Christ, the new Adam and God, constitutes the model for the beneficial influence of a saint on the natural world. For Christ healed physical and spiritual illness, granting comfort and healing to all people, while at the same

time bringing calm and peace to stormy seas, multiplying five loaves of bread to feed the five thousand, thereby combining the reconciliation of spiritual and natural harmony. If we want to exert a positive impact on the current negative natural and political conditions of our world, then we have no other alternative than faith in the Risen Christ and fulfillment of his saving commandments.

Christ has risen and given new life to the perfect ethos of humankind, which had darkened this ethos. Christ became the first-born and pioneer of the regeneration of the world and the whole of creation. The message of the Resurrection is not empty of meaning for the quality of human life and the balanced function of nature. As we completely and profoundly experience the Resurrection of Christ in the depth our heart, our existence shall favorably impact upon all humanity and the natural world. The natural sciences may not yet fully have underlined the relationship between the regeneration of humanity and the renewal of creation, but the experience of the saints – which should be the aim our own experience – confirms the experientially proven fact that, indeed, a person reborn in Christ restores the harmony of the natural world disturbed by sin. In Christ, the saint can move mountains for the good of the world, while the sinful person, who opposes the ways of God, can shake the earth and raise destructive waves.

Let us approach the sanctity of the Risen Christ in order, through His grace, to calm the natural and moral waves that trouble our world today.

May the grace of our Risen Lord Jesus Christ be with you all, beloved children in the Lord. Amen.

Holy Pascha 2011
+ Bartholomew of Constantinople
Fervent supplicant for all
before the Risen Christ

To be read in churches during the Divine Liturgy on the Feast of Pascha, following the reading of the Holy Gospel.