

Christ, the Wisdom of God

FIRST PASCHAL SERMON OF ST. GREGORY THE THEOLOGIAN*



IT IS THE DAY OF THE RESURRECTION and my beginning has good auspices.[1] Let us then keep the Festival with splendour,[2] and let us embrace one another. Let us say "Brethren" even to those who hate us; much more to those who have done or suffered aught out of love for us. Let us forgive all offences for the Resurrection's sake: let us give one another pardon . . .; that He Who today rose again from the dead may renew (us) also by His Spirit; and clothing (us) with the New Man, may give me to His New Creation, to those who are begotten after God, as a good modeler and teacher for Christ, willingly both dying with Him and rising again with Him.

Yesterday the Lamb was slain and the door-posts were anointed, and Egypt bewailed her firstborn, and the Destroyer passed up over, and the Seal was dreadful and reverend,[3] and we were walled in with the Precious Blood. Today we have clean escaped from Egypt and from Pharaoh; and there is none to hinder us from keeping a Feast to the Lord our God -- the Feast of our Departure; or from celebrating that Feast, not in the old leaven of malice and wickedness, but in the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth,[4] and carrying with us nothing of ungodly and Egyptian leaven.

Yesterday I was crucified with Him; yesterday I died with Him; today I am quickened with Him; yesterday I was buried with Him; today I rise with Him. But let us offer to Him Who suffered and rose again for us --- you will think perhaps I am going to say gold, or silver, or woven work or transparent and costly stones, the mere passing material of earth, that remains here below, and is for the most part always possessed by bad men, slaves of the world and of the Prince of the world. Let us offer *ourselves*, the possession most precious to God, and most fitting; let us give back to the Image what is made after the Image. Let us recognize our Dignity; let us honour our Archetype; let us know the power of the Mystery, and for what Christ died.

Let us become like Christ, since Christ became like us. Let us become God's for His sake, since He for our sake became Man. He assumed the worse that He might give us the better; He became poor that we through His poverty might be rich,[5] He took upon Him the form of a servant that we might receive back our liberty; He came down that we might be exalted; He was tempted that we might conquer; He was dishonoured that He might glorify us; He died that He might save us; He ascended that He might draw to Himself us who were lying low in the Fall of sin. Let us give *all*, offer *all*, to Him Who gave Himself a Ransom and a Reconciliation for us. But one can give nothing like oneself, understanding the Mystery and becoming for His sake all that He became for ours...

CHRIST IS RISEN!

TRULY, HE IS RISEN!

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* In the West he is usually confused with his father, Gregory bishop of Nazianzen, because the Saint also once served as bishop of that city.

1) St. Gregory had just been ordained. The omitted parts of the sermon are references to his ordination and have been omitted for the sake of space.

2) Is. 64:5

3) This introduces us to the theme of the sermon: the Israelites were delivered from death by the sign of the blood of the sacrifice and redeemed from bondage in Egypt. This is a type of the Crucifixion of Christ and the Resurrection: Christ did not die to fulfill some sort of vengeance of God (as the sectarians teach in their pagan "Doctrine of Atonement"), but He died as a sacrifice of love to deliver man from death and free him from bondage of Satan (cf. Heb. 2:15). Christ did not redeem man from God's anger but from Satan's power: death. From this sermon, the clear dogmatical essence of our Orthodox Christian expression *Pascha* is seen. The word *Pascha* itself reveals the true meaning of the Crucifixion and Resurrection.

4) 1 Cor. 5:8

5) 2 Cor. 8:9

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