



*Metropolitan Serapion*

COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH

**DIOCESE OF LOS ANGELES**

**SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA AND HAWAII**

## **Paschal Message for the Feast of the Resurrection 2023**

*“Christ is Our Passover”*

My Beloved, the Blessed Children of the Holy Church,

Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!

It is my pleasure to wish all of you a joyful Feast of the Holy Resurrection, hoping that you experience the victorious power of the Glorious Resurrection.

The Feast of the Resurrection is also called “Pascha,” which literally means “to pass over.” Through the Resurrection, Christ passed over from death to life, and in turn allowed us also to pass over from death to life, as St. Paul wrote, “[God] raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:1-6), because “even when we were dead in trespasses, [He] made us alive together with Christ” (Eph 2:5).

In the Passover, the victory over death was achieved through death. Therefore, in the Hymn of the Resurrection, we glorify the Risen Christ saying, “By death He trampled death and to those in the tombs bestowing eternal life.”

Sin is death, because sin is separation from God, Who is the Source of our life. Therefore, God warned Adam that in the day he ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he “shall surely die” (Ge 2:17).

Disobedience is sin and “the wages of sin is death” (Ro 6:23). Death was required in order to abolish sin. However, it couldn’t be the death that came as a result of disobedience. Rather, it had to be death coming from obedience, which Christ did when He “humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death: death on a cross” (Eph 2:8). When the first Adam rebelled against God, he died the death of disobedience. He was exiled from the Garden of Eden and God told him, “For you are dust, and to dust you shall return” (Ge 3:19). God forbade him from eating from the fruit of the Tree of Life.

Whereas the first Adam died the death of disobedience, the Second Adam died the death of obedience on the Cross. “Therefore, God also has highly exalted Him and

---

*Mailing Address*

P.O. Box 4960  
Diamond Bar, CA 91765

*Web Address* <http://lacopts.org/>

*Administration*

3803 W. Mission Blvd.  
Pomona, CA 91766  
Tel. (909) 865-8378  
Fax (909) 865-8348

*His Eminence Metropolitan Serapion*

Tel. (909) 865-6308

E-mail: [bishopserapion@lacopts.org](mailto:bishopserapion@lacopts.org)

given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Php 2:9-11).

Since our human nature was corrupt and we were under the dominion of death and sin, we were incapable of offering complete obedience to God the Father. Therefore, Christ offered complete obedience to God the Father on our behalf. Additionally, Christ’s death on the Cross abolished sin, as St. Paul writes, “but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself” (Heb 9:26).

In the Old Testament, God gave humanity examples of passing over from the death of disobedience to the death of obedience, such as:

### *The Paschal Lamb, which is the Passover Lamb*

The Israelites were under bitter bondage to Pharaoh, similar to humanity’s bondage to Satan. In order to free the Israelites from bondage, God ordered them to kill the Passover lamb, and to “take a bunch of hyssop, dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that is in the basin. And none of you shall go out of the door of his house until morning” (Ex 12:22). Thus, blood is regarded as a symbol and a sign of death: “Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed.” (Ge 9:6)

The fact that the Israelites fulfilled God’s order and remained inside their homes with the blood marked on the lintel and the two doorposts meant that they were under the death of obedience. The fruit of their obedience was life, “For the Lord will pass through to strike the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over the door and not allow the destroyer to come into your houses to strike you.” (Ex 12:23) Certainly, the Lord did not need the blood on the house to differentiate between the houses of the Egyptians and those of His people, the Israelites. Yet, placing the blood on the house and remaining inside indicated obedience - the death of obedience. Consequently, they were saved from the death of bondage through the death of obedience.

### *Crossing the Red Sea - Passing through the Sea is a symbol of death*

Although crossing the Red Sea was a life-giving death for the Israelites, it was a fatal death for Pharaoh and his armies. The difference between the two was obedience. The Israelites crossed the Red Sea in obedience to God’s words to Moses, “But lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it. And the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea” (Ex 14:16). When Moses obeyed and “stretched out his hand over the sea” (Ex 14:21), the sea was divided. However, when Pharaoh and his soldiers also tried to follow the Israelites and cross the sea, they perished because of their disobedience to God, who ordered Pharaoh to let His people go. St. Paul explains that “by faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land, whereas the Egyptians, attempting to do so, were drowned” (Heb 11:29).

My beloved,

Let us rejoice as we pass over with our Risen Christ.

Let us pray for the peace of the Holy Church and for our beloved shepherd, H.H. Pope Tawadros II.

Let us pray for the souls of our beloved, who have preceded us to the Paradise, and with them the soul of our beloved father, Hegumen Ibrahim Aziz, asking God to grant His heavenly comfort to the families.

Let us pray for all suffering and weary souls, so our Lord may shine upon them with the life-giving light of His Glorious Resurrection and fill their hearts with joy.

Wishing you many happy returns.

Metropolitan Serapion