

THE HOLY ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF BOSTON
His Eminence, Metropolitan Ephraim of Boston

PASCHAL ENCYCLICAL
of
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My beloved Orthodox Christians:

Christ is risen!

As we know from the New Testament, the writings of the Church Fathers, and our hymnology, the events that occurred in the Old Testament were a preview of what was to happen in the New Testament. The Church Fathers call these previews "types," or "foreshadowings," or "pre-figurings." What happened then was a clue to the reality that would be fulfilled later.

In one of his Paschal sermons, St. Proclus, Patriarch of Constantinople, a disciple of St. John Chrysostom, gives us a description of these foreshadowings, or types, so that we may better understand the significance of both accounts — both those of the Old and those of the New Testaments. Here in brief, is what the Saint says:

The Paschal Mystery [of Christ], begun in Egypt long ago, was symbolically pointed out to us in the Old Law, in the sacrifice of the lamb. And now, in the Gospel, we celebrate the Resurrection of the Lamb: our Pascha.

Then a lamb of the flock was slain, as the Law laid down (Ex. 12); now Christ, the Lamb of God, is offered up. There a sheep from the sheepfold; here, in place of the sheep, the Good Shepherd lays down His life for His sheep. There the sprinkled blood upon the doorposts was a sign of deliverance for the people of God; here the precious Blood of Christ was poured out for the deliverance of the whole world, that we might be forgiven our sins. There the firstborn of Egypt were slain; here the many children of sinners are made clean confessing the Lamb. There Pharaoh and his fearful host are drowned in the sea; here the spiritual Pharaoh with all his people are immersed in the deep waters of Baptism. There the children of the Hebrews, crossing over the Red Sea, sang their song of victory to their Deliverer, singing: *Let us sing to the Lord: for He is gloriously glorified* (Ex. 15. 1); here those found worthy of Baptism sing their song of victory, chanting: *One is Holy, One is Lord, Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father.*

The prophet also sings: *The Lord is King, He is clothed with majesty* (Ps. 93. 1). The Hebrews, after the crossing of the Red Sea,

ate manna in the desert; but now, those who have come forth from the waters of Baptism eat Bread that came down from Heaven. For His is the voice that says: *I am the living Bread, which cometh down from Heaven* (Jn. 6, 31).

Rightly then does Paul exclaim:

"Now all these things happened to [the Jews] in figure" (I Cor. 10:11), but to us is given the reality.

The Saint goes on to explain that many of the Jewish people did not understand that the figure, the type, was useful only until the reality came. After that, it was no longer needed. When a sculptor is preparing to make a statue of silver or gold for a king, first he makes a clay model of the statue, and he is careful to preserve the clay model until he has completed the statue, the final product. After the final product has been completed, the clay model is then broken up as unnecessary. So it is with the Old Law, which has now become obsolete with the arrival of the Law of Grace and Life, given to us by our Saviour, the Vanquisher of death.

And there is one final, but very important, thing that we should keep in mind. The word "Pascha" is a Hebrew word, which means, "Passover." In Old Testament times, it signified the Jews' "passing over" from slavery into freedom. For us Orthodox Christians, the New Israel, it means our passing over from death into life. So, when we greet each other with the words, "May you have a blessed Pascha," what we are really saying is, "May you have a blessed Passage into life ever-lasting!" Amen. So be it.

My beloved Christians:

Christ is risen! Truly He is risen!

A blessed Pascha to all of you.

Your fervent suppliant unto God,

✠Ephraim, Metropolitan of Boston