

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

The  
PASCHAL ENCYCLICAL  
of  
His Eminence, Ephraim, Metropolitan of Boston

Christ is risen!

My beloved Orthodox Christians:

Many remarkable homilies of the Church Fathers remain untranslated as yet. For the great bulk of what has been translated into English so far we must thank, not ourselves, the Orthodox Christians, but the heterodox who have undertaken this task for years. In a modest way, our Church, especially through the labours of its monastic establishments, has endeavored to contribute to this needed work through its translation of our church services, the Synodicon of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, and other important works; but much remains to be done.

One remarkable sermon that has yet to be translated into the English language is a homily by St. John Chrysostom which bears the curious name, "On the Cemetery's Name and the Cross." The actual title of the sermon could be something like, "Why A Cemetery Is Named Thus." In this particular homily, Saint John explains why the place where we bury our brothers and sisters who have reposed is called a cemetery, a place of sleep, a dormitory, (*koimêtêrion* in Greek), and not as it was formerly, a *necropolis*, that is, a city of the dead, or a graveyard.

At one point in the sermon, the Saint tells us the following:

I will tell you something even more remarkable. Learn now [how Christ triumphed over the devil] and you will be even more amazed, for using the very weapons that the devil used to conquer us, Christ vanquished him! Once He seized his weapons, He triumphed over him, and listen now to how He did it: A virgin, wood, and death were the symbols of our defeat. The

virgin was Eve, for she knew not man. The wood was the tree [in Paradise], and death was Adam's *epitimon*. But behold, a virgin, wood and death — the symbols of our defeat — became the symbols of our victory. For instead of Eve, we have Mary; instead of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, we have the tree of the Cross; instead of Adam's death, we have Christ's death. Do you see how the devil is vanquished by the very weapons wherewith he vanquished us? By the tree, the devil vanquished Adam; by the Cross Christ conquered the devil. That tree led to Hades, whereas the Cross led back from thence those that had been led there. And again, that tree hid the captive's nakedness, whereas the Cross revealed to all the naked Victor from on high. Adam's death condemned his descendants, whereas Christ's death raised all that had preceded Him. "Who shall tell of the mighty acts of the Lord" [Ps. 105:2]? Out of death, to which we were subject, we became immortal. These are the accomplishments of the Cross!

Have you learned what manner of victory this was? Have you learned how the victory was won? Learn also that this achievement was painless. We did not stain our weapons with blood. We did not stand in battle array. We received no wounds. We saw not war and yet we gained the victory. The battle was the Lord's, yet the crown was ours. Since, therefore, the victory is ours, let us shout jubilantly, exactly as soldiers do, and let us all chant the hymn of victory today, praising the Master: "Death is swallowed up in victory! O death, where is thy victory? O Hades, where is thy sting?" (I Cor. 15:54).

These things has the Cross accomplished for us! The Cross is the trophy of victory against the demons, the sword against sin, the blade wherewith Christ smote the serpent. The Cross is the goodwill of the Father, the glory of the Only-begotten Son, the joy of the Holy Spirit, the ornament of the Angels, the safeguard of the Church, the boast of the Apostle Paul, the rampart of the Saints, the light of the whole world!

Elsewhere in the sermon, Saint John speaks with great enthusiasm over Christ's triumph over Hades and the devil:

By His death, Christ bound the chief of robbers and the prison guard, that is, the devil and death, and transferred their treasures, that is, the entire human race, to the royal treasury. . . The King Himself came to the prisoners. . . and broke the doors, crushed the bars, vanquished Hades, and stripped the prison.

Certainly, there is nothing more that I can add to the words of a man whose speech was golden!

My beloved Orthodox Christians: Christ is risen! Truly He is risen!

Your fervent suppliant unto God,

✠Ephraim, Metropolitan of Boston

Protocol Number 2902  
Holy Pascha, 2010