

# SUNDAY THEOSIS #2-57

## Good News from the East

By Father John Zeyack

### Resurrection of Our Lord Pascha

#### Christ is Risen!

Jesus is risen from the dead! He has conquered death! He has overcome the world that is alienated from God. He has raised us to new life! This is our song! This is our creed! This is what we live by as Christians!

What is different about this new life? What does Jesus give us that we don't already have? What does God offer us that the world does not offer us?

I would like to remember a very vivid story. A mother died. She had five children and many grandchildren. She was a well-loved woman. One of her sons had asked to speak on behalf of the family. He stood up and began to speak about his mother. He told of her warmth, her humor, her willing sacrifice for her family, her joy, and her love. Then he said, "I know that my Mom loved me best. I know that for my Mom I was special...and that's how she made us all

feel." He spoke well. He spoke truly. His mother's love was so strong, so faithful, so personal that each of her children knew they were special and unique.



I think that God's love for each of us is the same. We have the same human nature. But each one of us has a unique character, a name, something unrepeatable about us. God doesn't make two alike.

That is so different from what our world tells us. Our everyday world, our world of competition, our world of numbers, our world of betrayal and unfaithfulness, tells us we are always being compared, we are always being measured, and that we are always coming up short. We aren't good enough, we aren't smart enough, and we aren't rich enough. There is always something missing



in us. You are just a number. You are measured by what you do and what you have. And that's not from God! But it's a message we hear everyday.

And so we work harder, we try harder, we fail miserably, we compensate with drugs, alcohol, sex and all sorts of escape routes. We measure ourselves through constant competition. We abuse power and position. We are only concerned about number one – me. We become selfish and selfserving. And we see that as normal. We are so caught up in this world of illusion and lies.

And then comes Jesus.

The Gospel today from St. John's opening words summarizes God's plan of salvation. The Eternal Word, God's Son, true God from all eternity, through Him all things came into being. He Himself came into this world. He came into our world, to reveal God's Love, to open us to God's truth.

He was announced by John the Baptist: "Look! Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

He came unto His own and His own rejected Him. But any who did accept Him He empowered to become children of God. These are they who believe in his name...

These are they who are born again

to new life – not by blood, nor by carnal desire, nor by our willing it, but by God.

The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us and we have seen His Glory: the glory of an only begotten Son coming from the Father filled with enduring love. Of His fulness we have all had a share, grace for grace.

The Law came through Moses, but Grace and Truth came through Jesus Christ! That Grace and Truth are ours. We know

God's Love. We are God's children in Jesus Christ. We are special. We are unique. We are loved with an eternal love. This is what Jesus gives us. This is what transforms our everyday lives. This is what has been poured into us by the Grace of the Holy Spirit.

This is why Jesus' teaching is so rich. This is why we worship and praise God. This is why we renew our Covenant with God in the Holy Eucharist and remember all that God has done for us in Jesus Christ. This is why we receive Holy Communion –to be filled with Jesus' Body and Blood, to be filled with His Spirit. To be nourished by God Himself so that we can carry our burdens in hope and trust, so that we can be faithful in loving ourselves and one another, so that we can forgive and start anew, so that we live fully,



trustfully, and openly with God. So that we see His grace and loving kindness and that we offer this gift to our world, to our families and to one another.

May the love of Jesus, which has been poured into us, which we have received, fill us with joy and peace and hope.

### **Blessed is the Kingdom**

We come to bless God, to praise Him, to thank Him, to glorify Him. We come to acknowledge God's Kingdom, God's Dominion over our lives and over all life. We come to acknowledge God's Kingdom over all creation.

God gave Adam and Eve everything, all creation. They were given Paradise, pure gift, unearned gift, God's gift. But they had to acknowledge God's sovereignty: they couldn't partake of the tree of good and evil.

The Devil won. The tempter wrapped the bait in such sweet words that they just had to try it. God's plan

was thwarted. God's creation was defiled, and God's sovereignty was denied. And we know the rest of the story: evil, death, sin reigned; ignorance, fear, terror, deception, intrigue took over.

God would win back his world, his creation, his humanity and restore his order in the world. He sent His Son. The Devil laughed. The powers of evil mocked God on the Cross. The reign of death and sin couldn't be overcome. The Cross was the final defeat of God.

That's not the end of the story. And that's why we are here today: to acknowledge God's Victory over death, sin, and evil. We come to praise God, to bless Him, to thank Him, to glorify Him for His Victory. We come to acknowledge that Jesus is Lord of the living and of the dead. And over and over we sing a hymn of triumph – by death He conquered death. He reached down into the utter depths and depravity of sin and death and nailed it with himself on





the Cross. He restored Adam and Eve and broke the power of death. He opened the gates of Paradise and inaugurated the Kingdom of Grace. He paid the price of pride by His humility. He paid the price of disorder by His obedience. He paid the price of death by His own death on the Cross. He paid the price of depravity, of hatred, of evil, and restored our human race. In Him, God's Kingdom and Power and Dominion and God's Glory shown forth. All Power is His:

Full authority has been given to me both in heaven and on earth; go therefore and make disciples of all the nations. Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to carry out everything I have commanded you. And know that I am with you always, until the end of the world.

John's prologue that we read in today's Gospel puts it this way:

The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us, and we have seen His Glory. The Glory of the only begotten Son coming from the Father filled with enduring love. ...of his fullness we have all had a share... for while the Law was given through Moses, Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ!

By faith and by baptism we inherit this Kingdom. By our faith and offering ourselves with Christ we share in His Victory. We sing this truth in our resurrection matins: "I was buried yesterday with You, O Christ; but today I rise resurrected with You. Yesterday I crucified myself with You, O Savior. Now glorify me with You in Your Kingdom."

Christ is risen! God is King! Christ is risen! The Kingdom of God is open! Christ is risen! The Kingdom of God is ours. Christ is risen! And we are risen with Him! That is the Victory of Easter. Let us live this faith! Let us live Christ's command to love one another as I have loved you! Let us bless, praise, and thank our God for His Victory. Let us embrace one another in that Victory and take our victory song into the world. Christ will not be defeated! His reign will have no end. Christ is risen from the dead! By death He conquered death and to those in the graves, He granted life!

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