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**THE PASCHAL MESSAGE OF HIS EMINENCE, THE MOST REVEREND, DMITRI  
ARCHBISHOP OF DALLAS AND THE SOUTH  
PASCHA 2008**

***Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed!***

A recent visitor to an Orthodox Church, interested in learning more about the Faith, asked with all due respect about, “the relevance of Orthodox liturgical services to the post-modern era.” As the local priest considered his question he thought about the end of the Lenten journey: “the chosen and holy day...the Feast of Feasts...” It did not occur to the priest at the time but one possible answer to this inquiry might have taken the form of an invitation to attend the Midnight Service. The experience of absolute joy in the Resurrection, as expressed by the faithful packed wall to wall in the Church on Pascha night, seems to transcend categories of “relevance” and “need,” making questions about such things appear themselves almost irrelevant.

From time to time the relevancy of the traditional Christian Faith itself also comes under scrutiny. Such a position is understandable to the degree that the words and actions of Christians remain inconsistent with the vision of both God and man set forth in the Church’s Living Tradition, to the extent that they refrain from challenging contemporary society with that same vision.

The Paschal season provides an opportunity to measure our own lives according to these principles. As an aid to this endeavor the special hymns and Gospel lessons during the forty days remind us continually of the mysteries into which we have been baptized: Christ’s Death and Resurrection. The prescribed readings from the Book of Acts contain examples of great leaders who indeed confronted their day and time with God’s Truth. They accomplished this, however, not only with a readiness to preach Christ crucified and risen, but with a desire to share in His sufferings and triumph. They identified completely with the words of their Master, “He who gains his life shall lose it, but he who loses his life for my sake and for the Gospel’s, the same shall save it.” “Let him who would come after Me, deny himself, take up his cross and follow Me.”

This kind of whole-hearted witness is needed in each generation. It makes questions about “relevancy” somewhat unnecessary with regard to both liturgical services and the Faith. Through the apparent weakness of men resulting from self-sacrifice and true worship the glory of God is revealed, drawing men unto itself. The life giving character of the Cross when manifested

through the disciples is more fully appreciated by those who initially consider the Way of the Cross to be scandalous or foolish. Without this evidence, however, of lives genuinely renewed through faith in the crucified, risen Lord, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the preaching of the Gospel is in vain. Individuals and communities offering themselves wholly to God, transformed by His grace, constitute proof that what Christians preach is true.

With the above thoughts in mind and borrowing a phrase from the Apostle Paul, “if then ye be (crucified) and risen with Christ” (Col. 3:1), how will we conduct ourselves in the days ahead? Will the multitudes, skeptical of a Faith whose main symbol is the cross of a crucified Savior, sincerely questioning the relevancy of that ancient Faith for modern times, see in us reason for hope? And, will we ourselves find renewal and become a source of joy for those around us? The Orthodox Faith we profess will ultimately be measured by the effect that it has on our lives. For the sake of our neighbor and for our own salvation let us rededicate ourselves to the fullness of “grace and truth” as revealed through our Lord, God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

With love in the Risen Lord,

*+Dmitri*

**+DMITRI**

Archbishop of Dallas and the South