

## **OUR FATHER AMONG THE SAINTS EPIPHANIUS**

### **BISHOP OF CYPRUS**

An Homily on the Burial of the Divine Body of Our

Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, on Joseph of

Arimathaea, and on the Lord's Descent

Into Hades Which, After His Saving

Passion, Wondrously Ensued on

the Holy and Great Saturday

What thing is this? Today there is great silence upon the earth, great silence and stillness, verily great silence, for the King sleeps. The earth was frightened and became still, for God fell asleep in the flesh and raised up those who from ages past were sleeping. God died in the flesh and Hades shuddered. God slumbered briefly, and those in Hades He awoke.

Where now that so recent tumult, those cries, that clamour against Christ, O ye lawless? Where the populace, the oppositions, the ranks, the weapons, the spears? Where the kings, the priests, and the judicable judges? Where the lanterns, the swords, the boisterous shouts? Where the rabble, the jeering, the irreverent guard? Verily in truth and in truth verily, "the peoples have meditated things empty and vain."<sup>1</sup>

They have stumbled against the Cornerstone, Christ, and they were broken; they have hurled themselves against the solid Rock, and they were crushed, and their waves dispersed into foam. They struck against the invincible Anvil, and they were shattered. Upon the wood [of the Cross] they raised up the Rock of life, and It brought them down and slew them. They bound the great Sampson, the Sun, God, but He, having loosed the age-old bonds, destroyed the Philistines and iniquitous. God, the Sun, Christ set beneath the earth and wrought for the Jews lasting nocturnal darkness.

Today is salvation for men upon the earth and for those who from ages past are beneath the earth. Today is salvation for the world, the visible and the invisible. Twofold today is the Master's coming,

twofold the oeconomy, twofold the love of men, twofold the descent and also the condescension, twofold His visitation of men. From Heaven to earth, and from earth to the nether world God makes His way.

Ye that from ages past have fallen asleep, rejoice! Ye that sit in darkness and the shadow of death, receive the great Light! With the servants is the Master; with the dead is God; with the mortal is Life; with the guilty is the Guiltless; with those in darkness is the unwaning Light; with the captives is the Liberator; and with those in the nethermost is He that is above the very heavens.

Christ [came] upon earth, and we have believed; Christ is among the dead, let us descend with Him and behold those mysteries yonder! Let us come to know the wonders of the Hidden One hidden under the earth! Let us learn how and to whom the *kerygma* was manifested in Hades!

What then? Did God save absolutely all when He appeared in Hades? In no wise. But there also He saved them that believed. Yesterday oeconomy, today authority; yesterday the tokens of infirmity, today those of majesty; yesterday the tokens of humanity, today those of Divinity. Yesterday, He was slapped; today He smites the tenement of Hades with the lightning of His Divinity. Yesterday He was bound; today He binds the tyrant with infrangible bonds. Yesterday He was condemned; today He bestows liberty on the condemned. Yesterday Pilate's ministers mocked Him; today Hades' gatekeepers saw Him and trembled.

But hearken now to the sublime tale of Christ's suffering! Harken and offer praise, hearken and glorify, hearken and preach the wondrous works of God: how the Law retires; how grace blossoms forth; how the types pass away; how the shadows vanish; how the Sun fills the whole world; how the Old [Covenant] has grown old; how the New is established; how things of ancient times have perished; how things new have flourished.

There were two peoples on Sion at the time of Christ's Passion, that of the Jews and that of the nations; and two kings, Pilate and Herod; and two high priests, Annas and Caiaphas. And this was so that simultaneously there be two Paschas, the one terminating, and Christ's just beginning.

On that evening two sacrifices were performed, since two salvations, I mean of the living and of the dead, were accomplished. The Jew bound a lamb and sacrificed it by slaughter; but he from the nations [sacrificed] God in the flesh. The former gazed upon the shadow; the latter ran to God, the Sun. The

Jews bound Christ and sent Him away; but they from the nations eagerly received Him. The first offered as sacrifice an animal victim; the second the body of God. The Jews commemorated their passing over from Egypt, whilst they from the nations heralded their deliverance from error.

And these things, where did they take place? In Sion, the city of the great King, where He "wrought salvation in the midst of the earth."<sup>2</sup> In the midst of two living beings was Jesus, the Child of God, known,<sup>3</sup> in the midst of the Father and the Spirit, two living Beings; Life from Life, he says, known as a living Being, and in the midst of angels and men He was born in a manger.

In the midst of two peoples He lies as the Cornerstone; in the midst of the Law and the prophets He is preached; in the midst of Moses and Elias He is seen upon the mount; in the midst of two thieves He is recognized as God by the grateful thief; in the midst of the present life and the future He sits as the eternal Judge; and today in the midst of the living and the dead He works a twofold life and salvation. Nay, again I say a twofold life, a twofold birth and also rebirth.

Listen now to the circumstances of Christ's twofold birth and acclaim the wonders. An angel announced to Mary Christ's maternal birth, and an angel announced to Mary of Magdala His awesome rebirth from the grave. At night Christ is born in Bethlehem, and at night in Sion He is reborn. Upon His birth He receives swaddling bands, and here also He is wound round with swaddling bands. When born He received myrrh, and at His burial He receives myrrh and aloes.

There Joseph was the name of Mary's non-husband husband, but here Joseph of Arimathaea proved to be the burier of our Life. In Bethlehem in a manger the former took place, and the latter in the tomb as in a manger. First the shepherds were given news of the birth of Christ, and first the shepherds, Christ's disciples, were given news of His rebirth from the dead. There the angel cried "Rejoice!" to the virgin, whilst here Christ, the Angel of Great Counsel, cried "Rejoice!" to the women.

At His first birth Christ after forty days entered the earthly Jerusalem, and the temple, and as firstborn He offered a pair of turtle-doves to God. But at His resurrection from the dead Christ after forty days ascended to the Jerusalem on high, from whence He departed not, and as the incorruptible First-born from the dead, in the true Holy of Holies He offered to God the Father our soul and body as two spotless turtle-doves; and like some Symeon the ancient, God the Father received Him uncircumscribably in to His embrace, into His own bosom.

If, however, thou hearest these things as though they were fables and not with faith, the unbroken seals of the Master's tomb condemn thee with respect to Christ's rebirth. For just as Christ was born from the Virgin whilst the natural gates of the virginal nature remained closed at the opening of the womb, so also Christ's rebirth was wrought whilst the seals of the tomb were unbroken.

But as to how Christ, our Life, was placed in the tomb, and when, and by whom, let us listen to the sacred words.

"When even was come," he says, "there came a rich man of Arimathaea named Joseph, and went boldly unto Pilate and begged from him the body of Jesus."<sup>4</sup> A mortal went in before a mortal, asking to receive God; the God of mortals he begs; clay stands before clay so as to receive the Fashioner of all! Grass asks to receive from grass the Heavenly Fire; the miserable drop seeks to receive from a drop the whole Abyss!

Who ever saw, who ever heard such a thing? A man grants to a man the Creator of men; a lawless man undertakes to surrender the Definition of the Law of [sic — I think they meant "to"] lawless men; a judge deprived of judgment permits the burial of the Judge of judges Who has been judged to death.

"When even was come," he says, "there came a rich man named Joseph." Truly was this man rich who carried away the entire compound hypostasis of the Lord. Verily was he rich, because he received the twofold nature of Christ from Pilate. He was rich indeed, because he was accounted worthy to carry off the priceless Pearl. Truly was he rich, for he bore away the Pouch overflowing with the treasure of Divinity. And how should that man not be rich who acquired the Life and Salvation of the world? How should Joseph not be rich, who received as a gift Him that sustains and rules all things?

"When even was come," for the Sun of Righteousness had then set into Hades. Wherefore, "There came a rich man named Joseph of Arimathaea, who was a secret [disciple] for fear of the Jews. And there came also Nicodemus, which at first came to Jesus by night."<sup>5</sup> O hidden mystery of mysteries! Two secret disciples came to conceal Jesus in a tomb, thus teaching by His concealment the mystery concealed in Hades of the God concealed in the flesh.

Each one of these men surpassed the other in their affection for Christ. For Nicodemus proved his magnanimity by the myrrh and aloes, and Joseph proved worthy of praise by his daring and boldness before Pilate. For he, casting off all fear, went in unto Pilate and begged the body of Jesus.

Now when he went in he acted very shrewdly, so as to obtain his longed-for aim. Wherefore, he did not employ high-sounding and pompous words, lest Pilate be moved to wrath and he fail in his request. Nor did he say to him, "Give me the body of Jesus, Who but a short time ago darkened the sun, split the rocks asunder, shook the earth, opened the sepulchres [sic], and rent the veil of the temple!" Nothing of the kind said he to Pilate.

But what, then? A certain pitiful plea, in every wise lowly. "O judge, I have come to make of thee a trifling of Him that was by thee condemned, Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus the poor, Jesus the homeless, Jesus the crucified, the bound, the shelterless, the Stranger, Who in a strange land is unknown, Jesus the contemptible, Who fore all was suspended [on the Cross]."

"Give me this Stranger, for what profit to thee is the body of this Stranger? Give me this Stranger, for from afar He came to this place to save a stranger, to a dark region He descended to draw up a stranger. Give me this Stranger, for He alone is a stranger. Give me this Stranger, whose country we know not, the strangers. Give me this Stranger, whose place and birth and ways we know not, the strangers. Give me this Stranger, Who lived in a strange land a strange life and existence. Give me this Stranger, whose generation and disposition we know not, the strangers. Give me this Stranger, Who had not where to lay His head. Give me this Stranger, Who as a homeless stranger in a strange land was born in a manger. Give me this Stranger, Who from the very manger fled Herod as a stranger. Give me this Stranger, Who from His very swaddling bands was a stranger in Egypt, Who has not city, no village, no home, no abode, no kindred, for this Stranger is found in foreign lands with His Mother.

Give me, O prince, this naked man on the Cross that I may cover Him that covered my nature's nakedness. Give me Him that is both a dead man and God, that I may shroud Him that has hidden mine iniquities. Give me, O prince, this dead man Who buried my sin in Jordan. I entreat thee for a dead man Who suffered injustice from all, Who by a friend was sold, Who by a disciple was betrayed, Who by brethren was persecuted, Who by a slave was smitten.

For a dead man I interceded, Who was condemned by them that He freed from slavery, Who by them was given vinegar to drink. Who by them that He healed was wounded, Who by His own disciples was forsaken, Who of His own Mother was bereaved. For a dead man, O prince, I beseech, that homeless One Who was suspended on the Cross, for He has no father near Him upon the earth, no friend, no disciple, no kindred, no burier. Nay, He is alone, the Only-begotten of the Unique, God in the world, and none else save He."

When these things Joseph spake to Pilate on this wise, Pilate commanded that the all-holy body of Jesus be given him. And he went to the place called Golgotha and took God in the flesh down from the Cross and laid Him on the earth, naked God in the flesh, Him that was not merely a man.

Lo, He is beheld lying low Who drew all men on high. And He for a brief time is bereft of breath Who is the Life and Breath of all. He is seen bereft of eyes Who created the many-eyed beings. He lies prostrate Who is the resurrection of all. And God is slain in the flesh Who raised up the dead. The thunder of God the Word is now silent for an instant, and He is borne in the arms of men Who holds the earth in His hand.

Dost thou really, O Joseph, know Whom thou wast given when thou didst ask and receive? Dost thou truly know Whom thou didst carry when thou camest to the Cross and didst bring down Jesus? If in truth thou knowest Whom thou didst carry, thou art now verily become rich.

And how is it that thou givest burial to this most awesome body of God? Praiseworthy is thine ardour, but even more praiseworthy the disposition of thy soul. For dost thou not tremble, bearing in thine arms Him before Whom the Cherubim tremble? With what fear dost thou strip that Divine flesh of the loin cloth? And how dost thou reverently restrain thine eye? Art thou not fearful when gazing upon and shrouding the nature of God's flesh, He that surpasses nature?

Tell me, O Joseph, dost thou really bury towards the East a dead man that is the Dayspring of the East? And with thy fingers dost thou close the eyes of Jesus as befits the dead, nay, of Him that with His immaculate finger opened the eyes of the blind? And dost thou bind the mouth of Him that opened the mouth of the stammerer? Dost thou lay out with thy hands Him that extended the withered hands? Or dost thou bind the feet, as befits the dead, of Him that made motionless feet to walk? Dost thou place upon a bed Him that commanded the paralytic, "Take up thy bed and walk"?<sup>6</sup>

Dost thou empty out myrrh upon the celestial Myrrh Who emptied Himself and sanctified the world? Dost thou dare to wipe that Divine side of Jesus bleeding still, the side of God who healed the woman of an issue of blood? Dost thou wash with water God's body which cleanses all and bestows purification? But what lamps dost thou light for the "true Light which enlighteneth every man"?<sup>7</sup>

What funeral odes dost thou chant for Him that is hymned unceasingly by all the Heavenly hosts? And dost thou weep as thou He were dead that wept and raised up Lazarus, the four days dead? And dost thou bewail Him that gave joy to all and banished the sorrow of Eve?

Albeit, I bless thy hands, O Joseph, which ministered and clasped the bleeding hands and feet of Jesus' Divine body. I bless thy hands which drew nigh to God's bleeding side before Thomas, the believing disbeliever, the acclaimed inquisitive. I bless thy mouth filled insatiably, and united to the mouth of Jesus, whence it was filled with the Holy Spirit. I bless thine eyes which thou didst press against the eyes of Jesus, whence they partook of the true light. I bless thy countenance which drew nigh to the countenance of God. I bless thy shoulders which bore the Bearer of all. I bless thy head against which Jesus, the Head of all, reclined. I bless thy hands wherewith thou didst carry Him that carries all.

I bless Joseph and Nicodemus, for they replaced the Cherubim by uplifting and carrying God and, as God's ministers, the six-winged Seraphim also, for not with wings but with a winding sheet they covered and rendered honour to the Lord. Him that the Seraphim hold in dread, the Same Joseph and Nicodemus carry upon their shoulders, and all the bodiless orders stand in awe.

When Joseph and Nicodemus came, the entire divine populace of angels swiftly gathered. The Cherubim run before them, the Seraphim hasten with them, the Thrones help them to carry, the Six-winged cover Him, and the Many-eyed are struck with dread, seeing Jesus in the flesh bereft of vision; the Powers aid in shrouding, the Principalities offer hymns, the order of Angels tremble, and all the hosts of the celestial ranks are stupified [sic].

And marvelling [sic] they question and say one to another, "What fearsome thing is this? What this dread? What this trembling? What manner of deed? What is this great, strange and incomprehensible spectacle? He that as naked God on high we cannot see, the Same on earth is easily seen naked by men!"

Him before Whom the Cherubim stand with reverent fear, Joseph and Nicodemus bury fearlessly. When did He descend that never left [the regions] on high? How did He go forth that remains within? How did He that fills all things come upon earth?

In what manner did He slip away that eludes [the sight of] all? He that is on high with His Father as perfect God, is below with His Mother as perfect man. How is He that never appeared to us now

manifest to men as both man and the man-befriending God? How was the Invisible One beheld? How was the Immaterial One incarnate? How did the Impassible One suffer?

How did the Judge stand before a tribunal? How did Life taste of death? How is the Uncontainable One contained in a tomb? How does He sojourn in a sepulchre [sic] Who never left the Father's bosom? How does He enter the gates of a cave Who opened the gates of Paradise, Who broke not the gates of the Virgin, but burst the gates of Hades?

Nay, He Who [entering] for Thomas, opened not the gates, but Who to all men opened the gates of the Kingdom, and kept unopened the gates and seals of the tomb? How is He reckoned among the dead Who is free among the dead?<sup>8</sup> How does the unwaning Light come to the regions of darkness and the shadow of death?

Whither does He go? Where comes His path, He Whom death cannot dominate? What is the reason [of these things]? What the means? What is the intent of His descent into Hades? Perhaps He descends so as to bring up Adam the condemned, our fellow servant?

Verily, He goes to seek out Adam, the first-created, the lost sheep. It is certain that He wishes to visit those sitting in darkness and the shadow of death; it is certain that He goes to loose Adam the captive and his co-captive Eve from affliction, He that is both God and her Son.

But let us descend with Him, but let us rejoice together, but let us hasten, but let us skip, but let us escort Him, but let us praise Hi, but let us run quickly, seeing God's reconciliation with men and the release of the condemned by the good Master! The Friend of man by nature goes with great gallantry and might to lead forth them that are there held captive from ages past, them that dwell in the grave, whom bitter, insatiate death has tyrannically swallowed, oppressed, stolen from God and amassed; He goes to free them and number them with the denizens on high.

There Adam is found, the captive, the first-created, the first-born, and who of all those condemned to the nether regions is nethermost. There is Abel, the first to die, the first righteous man, the shepherd and type of Christ the Shepherd's unjust slaughter. There is Noe, the type of Christ, the Fashioner of the great Ark of God's Church, which saved all the bestial nations from the cataclysm of ungodliness by the Dove, the Holy Spirit, which banished from itself the blackish raven. There is Abraham, the sacrificer and father off Christ, Who sacrificed to God that most blessed Sacrifice which with double-edged sword dealt death to death.



There below is Isaac bound, who above<sup>9</sup> was bound of Abraham in olden times as a type of Christ. There is Jacob afflicted in Hades below, who above was once afflicted because of Joseph. There is Joseph the fettered, who in Egypt was cast into prison as a type of Christ the Prisoner and Potentate. There is Moses below in darksome regions, who once was in the cleft amidst the darkness. There is Daniel in the pit of Hades, who once above was in the pit of lions. There Jeremias as in a pit of slime lies in the pit of Hades and the corruption of death. There in that world-devouring leviathan of Hades Jonas lies as a type of Christ, the eternal and pre-eternal Jonas Who lives unto the ages and the ages of ages.

And there is David too, God's forefather, from whom Christ sprung after the flesh. But why speak I of David, Jonas, and Solomon? There is found the sublime John himself, who is greater than all the prophets, who as though in a dark womb proclaimed Christ to all in Hades, the twofold forerunner, the preacher of the living and the dead, he that from Herod's dungeon was sent to the common prison of Hades where both righteous and unrighteous from ages past were sleeping.

All the prophets and righteous unceasingly offered up secret, mystical supplications to God, begging for deliverance from that most grievous, gloomy, fiendish murk, and tenebrious, nocturnal black. One cried to God, "From the belly of Hades hearken unto my cry, hear my voice."<sup>10</sup> Another, "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord; O Lord, hear my voice."<sup>11</sup> And another, "Cause Thy face to shine, and we shall be saved."<sup>12</sup>

And another, "Thou that sittest on the Cherubim, manifest Thyself."<sup>13</sup> And another, "Stir up Thy might and come to save us."<sup>14</sup> And another, "Let Thy compassions quickly go before us, O Lord."<sup>15</sup> And another, "Deliver my soul from the nethermost Hades."<sup>16</sup> And another, "O Lord, bring up my soul out of Hades."<sup>17</sup> And another, "Abandon not my soul in Hades."<sup>18</sup> And another, "Let my life ascend from corruption unto Thee, O Lord my God."<sup>19</sup>

The God of tender mercies verily heard all these cries, and so Christ judged that it was not right that His love for man should only be shared with them that lived in His days and after Him, but that those also that before His coming had gone down to Hades and that sat in darkness and the shadow of death should be partakers of the same as well. Thus God the Word visited with body and soul men who were still in the flesh, but to the souls which were bereft of bodies He manifested Himself in Hades with His Divine and blameless soul, bereft of a body but not of Divinity.

Wherefore, let us hasten in mind and journey to Hades so as there to see how He masterfully mastered the tyrannical master of a mastership mightily [sic] mastered and how by the lightning flash of His

brilliance He without hands captured in His hand<sup>20</sup> the whole soldiery of the ranks of those deathless orders. He took away the doorless doors, nay, Christ the Door shattered those woodless gates by the wood of the Cross; by those divine nails He burst and broke the eternal bars; by the bonds of His Divine hands He dissolved like wax the indissoluble bonds; and by the spear [thrust] in His side He transfixed the heart of the tyrant. "There did He break the power of the bow,"<sup>21</sup> when upon the Cross He stretched out the sinews<sup>22</sup> of His Divine arms like a bowman.

Therefore, if thou followest Christ silently thou shalt presently see where He bound the tyrant; where He hung the latter's head; how exhumed that dungeon; whither He led the prisoners; how He trampled upon the serpent; where He suspended its skull; and how He liberated Adam; how He raised up Eve; how He broke down the middle wall;<sup>23</sup> how He punished the bitter dragon; how He made perdition to perish; and where He restored man to his ancient dignity.

Yesterday by way of oeconomy He refused to summon numerous legions of angels, saying to Peter, "Can I not now bring forward more than twelve legions of angels?"<sup>24</sup> But today in a manner befitting God, a warrior and a sovereign, through death He tramples down the tyrant of Hades and death, having with Him the immortal legions — not simply twelve, but thousands of thousands and ten thousand ten thousands — of the bodiless hosts and the invisible ranks: the Dominions, the unthroned Thrones, the unwinged Six-winged, the eyeless Many-eyed and all the celestial bands.

For it is certain that they accompanied, escorted and honoured Christ as their own Master and King; but they were not allies — far be it! — for what assistance could Christ the Almighty need? But both by obligation and as loving to stand beside their Master and God, they are trusty spearmen, hoplites, glorious and astute staff-bearers of the Master's divine offices. At the Divine bidding alone they with zeal and speed anticipate one another in transforming act into deed by His command, and they are crowned with victory over the ranks of enemies and transgressors.

Therefore they descended then in haste, hastening with their God and Master to the subterranean chambers of Hades — which are deeper down than anything terrestrial — and to the under-worldly abodes of them that have fallen asleep from ages past; there He gallantly brought forth them that from of old lay in fetters.

As soon as the glistening, divinely-accompanied presence of the Master reached Hades' windowless, sunless, nocturnal dungeons, hovels, lairs, and caves, Gabriel, the chief marshal was first of all — since, indeed, he is wont to bring men good tidings of joy — to exclaim with a mighty, archangelic, resounding,

commanding, lion-like voice to the hostile powers, "Lift up your gates, O ye princes,"<sup>25</sup> and with him Michael cries, "Be ye lifted up, ye everlasting gates."<sup>26</sup> Thereafter the Powers say, "Stand back, ye iniquitous gate-keepers!" Then the Dominions say with dominion, "Be broken, unbreakable bonds!" And others, "Be abashed, abominable foes!" And still others, "Fear, ye lawless tyrants!"

Now just as before a fearsome, invincible, all-powerful, regal, trophy-bearing battle array, terror and panic and pangs of dread seize the enemies of an unconquerable king, so and more so it befell those [evil beings] in Hades at the sudden, most strange coming of Christ to the nether world. The blinding bolt of lightning from above darkened the countenances of the hostile powers of Hades and they heard thunder-like voices and the [angelic] host commanding, "Lift up your gates, O ye princes! Do not merely open them, but lift them from the foundations, uproot them, remove them so that they never again be closed. Lift up your gates, O ye princes!

"Although the Master here present could enter even if the doors were shut, yet He commands you like run-away slaves to raise, remove, and break those everlasting gates. He orders not the common sort among you, but them that are esteemed by you to be princes, saying, 'Lift up your gates, O ye princes!' Your gates, none else but yours.

"Wherefore, O princes, though till now ye have wickedly held sway over those fallen asleep from ages past, from henceforth ye shall not be their rulers, nor rulers of others, but only of your own selves, but not even of yourselves. For Christ, the Heavenly Door is present. 'Prepare ye the way for Him that rideth upon the setting of Hades. Lord is His name, and the pathways leading forth from the gates of death are those of the Lords' Lord.'<sup>27</sup> Ye made the ways of entrance, but He came to make the pathways leading forth.

"Therefore tarry not, lift up your gates quickly, take them away and return them not. But if ye think to procrastinate, we shall command the gates to be lifted up automatically of themselves. 'Be ye lifted up, ye everlasting gates!'"

And as soon as the hosts cried these things, straightway the gates were raised up, straightway the bonds were loosed, straightway the bars were broken, straightway the bolts fell away, straightway the foundations of the dungeon quaked, straightway the hostile powers were turned to flight, one pushing the other, one impeding the other, one exclaiming to the other, "Flee!"

They were terrified, they were shaken, they were awestruck, they were confounded, they were altered, they were frightened, they were dumbstruck and stupified [sic], confused and made to quake. One stood agape, another between his knees hid his head, another lay prostrate, another like one dead was motionless, another was possessed by awe, another lay with altered countenance, and another fled to an inner region.

For there Christ "cut asunder the heads of princes with amazement,"<sup>28</sup> there "they trembled" at Him, there they "burst their bridles,"<sup>29</sup> saying, "'Who is the King of Glory?'<sup>30</sup> Who is the great Being that, with so many, works here such wonders? Who is the King of Glory, that now works in Hades that which has never been wrought in Hades? Who is this, that now leads out from hence them that from ages past have fallen asleep? Who is this that has destroyed and abolished our insuppressible audacity and power, Who leads forth from the prison of Hades those fettered from ages past?"

But to those [wicked spirits] the hosts of the Master cried, "Do ye wish to learn, O lawless tyrants, who is the King of Glory? It is 'The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord, mighty and strong and invincible in war!'<sup>31</sup> This is He that banished and cast you down from the vaults of Heaven, ye spineless and lawless tyrants! This is He that in Jordan 'brake the heads of your dragons.'<sup>32</sup> This is He that by the Cross publicly exposed you, triumphed over you, and slew you. This is He that bound, blackened and banished you to the abyss. This is He that consigns you to, and destroys you in, the everlasting fire and in Gehenna.

Wherefore, do not linger, do not delay, but speedily bring forth those in bonds which ye wickedly swallowed till this day. From henceforth your dominion is destroyed, your tyranny is come to an end, your insolence is miserably extinguished, your arrogance is quashed, your might is trampled and ruined."

These things the royal hosts of the King spake to the hostile powers and then made haste. Some excavated the dungeon from its very foundations, while some routed the enemy's hosts from the outer regions, causing them to flee within; but others ran and searched the hovels, the jails, and the caverns; and others brought prisoners before the Master from every quarter; others bound the tyrant with infrangible bonds; others speedily obeyed them; and some ran before the Master and He proceeded to the innermost regions, while others followed Him as the victorious King and God.

As these things, therefore, and more than these were coming to pass, were proclaimed and made known, and all things were in an uproar, and the Master's presence was about to reach the very bottommost realm of the nethermost regions, then Adam, the first of men to be created, the first-fashioned and first-mortal, who lay in the innermost recesses bound with great security, heard the sound of the Master's feet as He came to the imprisoned, and he recognized His voice which sounded in

the prison as He walked. Thereupon Adam turned towards all his fellow captives from ages past and said, "I hear the sound of Someone's feet advancing towards us, and if He deigns to come even to this place, we shall be freed of our bonds, nay, if we should but see Him in our midst, we shall be delivered from Hades!"

And as Adam said these things and their like to all his fellow prisoners, the Master entered within, holding the Cross as a weapon of victory. Then Adam the first-fashioned beholding Him, beat his breast in exuberance and cried to all, "My Lord be with you all!" And Christ replied and said to Adam, "And with thy spirit," and grasping his hand, He said, "Stand up, 'Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall shine on thee."<sup>33</sup>

"I am thy God, Who for thy sake became thy Son, for thy sake and for thy descendants' sake, and now I say and with authority command the shackled, Come forth! and those in darkness, Be enlightened! and those asleep, Arise! Thee I enjoin, Awake, O sleeper! for I did not fashion thee to be held in Hades as a captive. Arise from the dead, for I am the Life of the dead! Arise, My creation, arise, Mine image, who wast also made in My likeness! 'Arise, let us go hence!<sup>34</sup> for thou art in Me and I in thee; we are one indivisible person.

"For thy sake thy God became thy Son; for thy sake the Master took the image of a slave; for thy sake I Who am above the heavens came down upon earth and even beneath the earth; for thee, who art a man, I became 'as a man without help, free among the dead;<sup>35</sup> for thee, who wentest forth from the garden [of Paradise], I from a garden was betrayed to the Jews and in a garden I was crucified.

"Behold upon My countenance the spittings which I received for thy sake so as to restore to thee the ancient in-breathing.<sup>36</sup> Behold upon My cheeks the slaps which I accepted so as to set aright thy twisted form in accordance to Mine image. Behold upon My back the scourgings which I accepted so as to scatter the burden of thy sins which weighs upon thy back.

"Behold My hands, which unto good were nailed to the tree [of the Cross] for thee, who unto evil didst stretch forth thy hand to the tree. Behold My feet, which were nailed and transfixed upon the tree [of the Cross] for the sake of thy feet which evilly ran to the tree of disobedience on the sixth day, that same day whereon the decree [of thy condemnation] was pronounced and whereon I wrought thy re-creation and re-opened Paradise.<sup>37</sup>

"For thy sake I tasted gall, so as to heal for thee the bitter pleasure caused by that sweet fruit. I tasted vinegar, so as to nullify thy poignant and contranatural cup of death. I accepted the reed, so as to undersign [the writ of] freedom for the race of men. I slept upon the Cross and by a sword was pierced in the side for thee, from whose side whilst thou wast sleeping in Paradise Eve was brought forth. My side healed the pain of thy side; My sleep shall wrest thee from the sleep of Hades; My sword arrested the sword turned<sup>38</sup> against thee.

"Wherefore arise, let us go hence! The foe led thee out of the land of Paradise; yet no more shall I restore thee to Paradise, but to a celestial throne. I restrained thee from the typical tree of life, but lo, I myself, the [true] Life, am united unto thee. I enjoined the Cherubim to watch over thee like a slave; now I make the Cherubim to worship thee like God. Thou didst hide from God as one naked; but lo, thou hast hidden within thyself naked God. Thou didst put on the skin-made coat of shame,<sup>39</sup> but being God I put on the haematic coat of thy flesh.

"Wherefore arise, let us go hence, from death into life, from corruption in incorruption, from darkness into everlasting light! Arise, let us go hence, from affliction into joy, from slavery into freedom, from prison into the Jerusalem on high, from bonds into repose, from detention into the delight of Paradise, from earth into Heaven! And for this did I die, and arose, that I should be Lord both of the dead and the living.

"Arise, let us go hence! For My Heavenly Father waits for the sheep that was lost. The ninety and nine sheep, the angels, await their fellow servant Adam, when he shall arise, when he shall ascend and to up to God. A cherubic throne is prepared, and the bearers thereof are swift and expectant. The bridal-chamber is made ready, the delicacies are prepared, the eternal tabernacles and abodes are waiting, the treasuries of good things are thrown open, the Kingdom of the Heavens has been prepared before the ages, and that which 'eye hath not seen, nor ear hath heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man,'<sup>40</sup> these same good things await mankind."

When the Master said this and more besides, Adam, being united to Him inwardly, rose up, and Eve arose as well, and the bodies of many others who in faith had fallen asleep from ages past arose<sup>41</sup> also, preaching the Master's resurrection on the third day.

The same, O men of faith, let us now joyously welcome; let us behold it and embrace it, as we form one chorus with the angels, and with the bodiless celebrate and glorify Christ Who raised us up from

corruption and gave us life, to Whom be glory and dominion with His Father, Who is without beginning, and His all-holy good and life-creating Spirit, both now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

#### Footnotes

1. Cf. [Ps. 2:1](#)
2. [Ps. 73:13](#)
3. Cf. [Hab. 3:3](#)
4. Cf. [Matt. 27:57, 58](#); [Mark 15:43](#)
5. Cf. [John 19:38, 39](#)
6. [John 5:8](#)
7. [John 1:9](#)
8. [Ps. 87:4](#)
9. I.e., on the earth. The Greek, although being a play on "below," can also mean "formerly."
10. Cf. Jonas 2:2.
11. [Ps. 129:1](#).
12. [Ps. 79:4](#).
13. [Ps. 79:2](#).
14. [Ps. 79:3](#).
15. [Ps. 78:8](#).
16. Cf. [Ps. 85:12](#).
17. Cf. [Ps. 29:3](#).
18. Cf. [Ps. 15:10](#).
19. Jonas 2:6.
20. I.e., subdued.
21. [Ps. 75:3](#).
22. The Greek word also means "bow-string."
23. Cf. [Eph. 2:14](#).

24. Cf. [Matt. 26:53](#).
25. [Ps. 23:7](#).
26. Ibid.
27. Cf. [Ps. 67:4](#), [21](#)
28. [Hab. 3:14](#).
29. Cf. Ibid.
30. [Ps. 23:10](#).
31. Cf. [Ps. 23:8](#).
32. Cf. [Ps. 73:14](#).
33. [Eph. 5:14](#).
34. [John 14:31](#).
35. [Ps. 87:4](#).
36. Vide [Gen. 2:7](#), "And God...breathed upon his face the breath of life."
37. I.e., on the Holy and Great Friday.
38. Vide [Gen. 3:24](#).
39. Or, "shameful coat of skin."
40. [1 Cor. 2:9](#).
41. Vide [Matt. 27:52](#).

Source: <http://theologica.ning.com/profiles/blogs/a-sermon-for-holy-saturday-by>