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The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Faith and Order

The Second Sunday of Zemene Fasika (*Paschal Season*)

Liturgical Readings:

1 Cor. 15:1 –20; 1 Joh. 1: 1– end; Acts 23:1-10,

Psalm 67:1—2;

John 20:19-end

The Anaphora of Saint Dioscorus

Christ is risen from the dead,

(trampling down death by death)

with high power and authority;

binding Satan in chains and (upon those in the tombs bestowing life)

setting Adam free,

and from now on it will be joy and peace.

He Is Risen: The Lifegiver of the Dead

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, One God. Amen.

Beloved in the holy covenant of grace, we assemble beneath the splendour of the most wondrous mystery ever revealed to mankind—a mystery that shook the foundations of the underworld, shattered the gates of brass, and broke the bars of iron asunder (cf. Psalm 107:16). Today we proclaim with triumphant joy the sacred confession of the Church: **“He is risen, and He has raised the dead with Him.”** This proclamation is not merely a liturgical refrain but the very heartbeat of the Christian faith, the victory-cry of the Church from the empty tomb to the ends of the earth.

The Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ stands as the axis upon which the whole history of salvation turns. From the earliest dawn of divine revelation, God had foreshadowed this victory. The Prophet Hosea spoke prophetically of the triumph over death: *“After two days will He revive us: in the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight”* (Hosea 6:2). Likewise the righteous Job, gazing through the veil of suffering into the hope of eternity, declared with unshakeable confidence: *“For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth”* (Job 19:25).

This same hope reached its radiant fulfilment in Christ Jesus, the Word made flesh (John 1:14), who entered our mortal condition in order to overthrow death from within. He who once stood before the tomb of Lazarus and cried with sovereign authority, *“Lazarus, come forth”* (John 11:43), now Himself emerges from the grave as the conqueror of death. The grave that sought to contain Him became instead the stage upon which His divine power was manifested. As the Apostle proclaims, *“Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him”* (Romans 6:9).

The ancient hymnographers of the Church, such as the venerable **Saint Yared**, clothed this truth in melodies that echo the praise of heaven itself. With inspired voice he proclaimed: *“Christ is risen, raising the dead; He has loosed the prisoners and by His mighty authority has set the souls free.”* In such sacred poetry, the Church celebrates not merely an event of the past, but the cosmic liberation wrought by the risen Lord.

Consider the moving narrative recorded in the Gospel according to **Saint Luke**. On the road to Emmaus, two disciples walked in sorrow, their hopes seemingly buried with their crucified Master. Yet as the mysterious traveler opened the Scriptures to them, their hearts burned within them (Luke 24:32). When their eyes were finally opened in the breaking of bread, they hastened back to Jerusalem with breathless urgency, only to hear the glorious proclamation already echoing among the Apostles: *“The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon”* (Luke 24:34).

This was no illusion, no phantom born of grief or imagination. The risen Christ appeared bodily among them, entering the room though the doors were shut (John 20:19). Standing in their midst, He spoke the peace that only the Victor over death can bestow: *“Peace be unto you.”* He invited them to behold His wounded hands and pierced side—the sacred trophies of His victory. *“Handle Me, and see,”* He said, *“for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have”* (Luke 24:39). And to dispel all doubt, He ate before them, revealing that the very body that hung upon the Cross now lives glorified in the new creation.

But this Resurrection is not Christ’s triumph alone; it is the dawn of humanity’s restoration. As the Apostle **Paul the Apostle** proclaims with theological majesty: *“But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept”* (1 Corinthians 15:20). Just as the first sheaf of the harvest offered in the temple promised the fullness yet to come (Leviticus 23:10–11), so Christ’s rising guarantees the resurrection of all who belong to Him.

Indeed, the Scriptures teach that His death was our death, and His rising is our rising. In baptism we are mystically united with Him: *“Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead”* (Colossians 2:12). The Apostle therefore exhorts the faithful: *“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God”* (Colossians 3:1).

This spiritual awakening—the resurrection of the soul—is what the Church understands as the **first resurrection**, a transformation of the inner life by divine grace. Through repentance and the indwelling Spirit, the believer passes from death unto life (John 5:24). Thus the Resurrection is not merely a future promise but a present reality lived in the communion of the Church.

Yet the Gospel proclamation has never been without opposition. Even in the earliest days, sceptics denied the possibility of the resurrection. Against such disbelief the Apostles bore unwavering witness. *“If Christ be not risen,”* writes **Paul the Apostle**, *“then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain”* (1 Corinthians 15:14). But the truth stands immovable: Christ is risen, and therefore death itself has been defeated.

The Apostle **Peter the Apostle**, filled with the Holy Spirit, boldly proclaimed that Christ, *“being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit,”* descended even to the realm of the departed, proclaiming victory to the spirits in prison (1 Peter 3:18–19). The risen Lord thus revealed that no corner of creation lies beyond His redeeming authority.

Long before these events unfolded, the royal prophet **David** had glimpsed the mystery through the inspiration of the Spirit: *“I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the Lord sustained me”* (Psalm 3:5). In these words the Church perceives a prophetic image of Christ, the true Son of David, who lay down in the sleep of death only to awaken in immortal glory. Likewise, another psalm foretold the empty tomb with prophetic clarity: *“Thou wilt not leave my soul in Sheol; neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption”* (Psalm 16:10), a passage explicitly applied to Christ by the Apostle Peter at Pentecost (Acts 2:27–31).

Thus, the Resurrection reveals the grand design of God's salvation. By descending into the depths of death, Christ shattered its dominion and plundered its captives. As foretold in the prophecy of **Isaiah**, *"He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces"* (Isaiah 25:8).

Beloved, this victory transforms the very meaning of our existence. Because Christ lives, death no longer holds the final word. Our mourning is turned into dancing (Psalm 30:11), our despair into living hope. We await the day when the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible (1 Corinthians 15:52), when the promise spoken by the Lord Himself will be fulfilled: *"I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live"* (John 11:25).

Therefore, let us live as those who truly belong to the Resurrection. Let us cast aside the old man with his deeds (Ephesians 4:22) and put on the new man, renewed after the image of our Creator (Colossians 3:10). Let our lives bear witness that Christ's victory is already at work within us.

For the empty tomb is not merely a monument of the past—it is the doorway to the life of the world to come.

Glory be to God the Father who raised His Son, glory to the Son who trampled down death by death, and glory to the Holy Spirit who gives life to the faithful, now and unto the ages of ages. Amen.