



χριστος ανεστη ! αλιθως ανεστη !
 христос воскрес ! воистину воскрес !
 Christ is risen ! He is risen indeed !
 Christus ist auferstanden ! Er ist wahrhaft auferstanden !
 Christus is opgestaan ! Hij is waarlijk opgestaan !
 Cristo e' risorto ! Veramente e' risorto ! i
 Hristos a înviat ! Adevarat a înviat !
 Kriste agsdga ! Cheshmaritad agsdga !

THE EASTER MESSAGE OF HIS EMINENCE AARCHBISHOP GABRIEL OF COMANE

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,
Christ is Risen!

"If you knew the gift of God ..." Jn. IV.10

It is with great joy that I join you all on this morning that knows no evening, on this feast that has no end, in this new time that enters the old world, in this blessed moment of eternity, where, as we contemplate the icon of the Descent into Hell, in which Christ drags Adam and Eve from the grave and with them raises us in the sweet and divine light of His Resurrection!

Indeed, what the icon of the Descent into Hell reveals is wonderful! What do we see? The Lord humbling Himself in His search for Adam, for the lost sheep. And this quest comforts us, soothes us, gives us strength, for it is us whom He addresses, it is us whom He seeks. In paradise God sought Adam who was hiding after the fall: "Where art thou, Adam?" But now, He does more than call out to him. The incarnate God, crucified and risen now descends into the depths of man's misery, our misery, to say to each of us: "Give me your hand, that I may raise you up!" This offer is made to every person, regardless of the depth of his poverty.

And what else do we see in this Icon of the Resurrection? We contemplate the luminous descent of Christ into our own hearts. It is there that He awaits us; it is there that He offers us His mercy. The Lord knows well our distress, where we hide in the misery of our weaknesses, where sometimes we pretend not to be, refusing to recognise the abyss we are in because of our sins. Yes, my brothers and sisters, it is there that Christ comes: He offers himself for us, He bends down to us, He draws us to Himself, He wants us to be «possessed» by His infinite love for us. But to make this possible, - since we are free - we must be prepared to reach out to Him, as He Himself does to us. Our entire being must reach out towards him! But take care, our entire being is lost in weakness and poverty, wounded by sin. And so, we cry out: «I am a lost sheep, call me, O Saviour, and save me!» (Office of the dead).

During the days before Easter, we relived the Passion of Christ, and today we contemplate Christ who is «passionate» about us. Dear brothers and sisters, this is not a mere play of words,

we are facing the very reality of our salvation: insofar as we are not seized by the passion of Christ for each one of us, insofar as we do not know that we are desired, sought by him, loved beyond what is thinkable, we are beings without light ... Rather, let us be creatures of fire, as the Psalmist says: «You make your servants flames of fire» (Ps 103.4). Let us be led by the wonderful light of the Resurrection and enter with zeal and confidence in our desire for God!

«Peace be with you all, “said the Lord to his apostles on the evening of Easter (John 20:19). Let us receive this peace, which comes from God’s boundless love for each of us and, in turn, let us become builders of peace: let us step out on the right path, let us be seized by desire for Christ, let us be filled by His compassion, let us be freed from our graves!

The Lord is life, and He says to us again today:

“I am your life”! If at certain moments we are in despair, He says to us: “I am your hope”! He gives us Joy again. Allow Him to enter our broken hearts, allow Him to trample and crush the doors of our own hell. Yes, truly «by death He has vanquished death, to those in the tombs he has given Life» (Troparion of Easter).

Beloved brothers and sisters, by all the love I have for you, I ask you to keep “all these things” in your hearts and to live by them in sharing with all people on earth! May the blessings of the Risen Lord be upon you all!

Christ is Risen!

He is risen indeed!

Paris, 11/24 April 2011

Cathedral of St. Alexander Nevsky, Paris

† Archbishop Gabriel of Comane

Exarch of the Ecumenical Patriarch



PASCHA ON THE SQUARE

It was a first in Belgium, in Liege. As done in Paris and other large cities in France when Easter falls on the same date in all Christian churches, the Ecumenical Cooperation of Churches in Liege organised a public and joint proclamation of the Resurrection. On the Sunday of Pascha at midday, at Cathedral Square in Liege, more than two hundred people gathered under a brilliant sun and in a convivial, but also reverent ambiance that radiated a Paschal joy that particularly marked this day. On the podium installed for the event, a great Paschal icon, a candle, the Gospel, and celebrants in liturgical vestments (unity of the Word within the diversity of appearances) were Anglican (Reverend

Paul Yiend), Catholic (Abbot François Dabin), Greek Orthodox (Father Nicolas Palamianakis), Russian Orthodox (Father Guy Fontaine), Protestant (Pastor Vincent Tonnon) and Syriac (Sub-deacon Fikri Gabriel). They were joined by Nicole Ingenbleek (secretary of the Cooperation) and deacon Luc Mahiels who had had the idea the previous year. A Taizé choir led the celebration through readings of praise (from both the Epistles and Gospels) and intercessory prayers. Metropolitan Panteleimon, referent for Orthodoxy in Belgium, had sent a message that was read by Father Nicolas, rector of the Greek parish in Liege. Bishop of Liege, His Grace Aloys Jousten, present among the celebrants, underlined that “the Spirit of the Resurrected lives in our hearts; He calls us to love all human beings and to construct with them a world of justice and peace for all men and all mankind.”

This was a very strong moment where the fundamentals of our faith were proclaimed: the Resurrection

of Christ. “It is a message of hope, of love, of light and of peace that, without doubt, differs from certain demonstrations we have seen elsewhere over the past few days, for other reasons. The Gospel is the good news that opens hearts and cannot imprison them!” Father Guy Fontaine, rector of the Russian Orthodox parish in Liege, president of the Cooperation and coordinator of the event commented at the outset of the celebration. The Gospel speaks to the world, and it is for this reason that we want it to be read in the public square, and that symbolically, during prayer, the Gospel was turned towards the four cardinal points.

The ceremony was concluded by a chime concert; it was possible to hear Western Paschal melodies as well as “Christos Voskresie” of the Russian tradition. This Sunday of Pascha in Liege, more than two hundred hearts vibrated at the proclamation in twelve different languages that “Christ is Risen!”



PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW'S VISIT TO PARIS

Patriarch Bartholomew's visit to St. Sergius Theological Institut in Paris on April 14th 2011 was an occasion to remember the

links that have united us (the Archdiocese) to the Ecumenical Patriarchat since 1931. It was, in fact, on this very same date that His Grace Euloge was summoned to resign by His Grace Serge, locum tenens replacement on the patriarchal Throne in Moscow. His Grace Euloge was asked to resign for having participated in meetings of prayer and support to Christians persecuted in the USSR, at which point he submitted himself to the Ecumenical Patriarchat in Constantinople. Patriarch Photius II supported His Grace Euloge on all points of view, and took him under his obedience with the title of Exarch in the

context of a "provisional Exarchate for Russian parishes in Western Europe."

This statute was confirmed by Ecumenical Patriarchs Benjamin and Maxim. After a period of hesitation between 1965 and 1971, the Archbishop was reinstated within the Ecumenical Patriarchate as a unified church body that has special status of internal autonomy (Charter of Patriarch Athenagoras of January 22, 1971). In June 1999 the statute was confirmed and expanded with the restoration of the title of Exarchate by the Saint Synode of the Ecumenical Patriarchat. His Grace Gabriel was therefore correct in saying in his welcoming address to Patriarch Bartholomew, that "our canonical link with the Ecumenical Patriarchat guaranties us communion with the whole Orthodox world, and we can live here, in France, and everywhere in Western Europe, in fruitful and brotherly cooperation with all Orthodox communities."



Patriarche Bartholomée, Mgr Gabriel, et le doyen père Nicolas Cernokrak

Upon his arrival to St. Serge, Patriarch Bartholomew was warmly received by members of the assembly of Orthodox bishops of France and professors of the Institute. After the hymn to the Mother of God in the church of St. Serge, His Grace Gabriel delivered his welcoming speech. In the Patriarch's response, he underlined the importance that Orthodoxy radiate within the Institute, especially since the Orthodox Theological Institute of Halki had not received Turkish authorisation to exercise its activities. A solemn academic session subsequently took place in the great hall on the main floor, organised principally for the occasion of the newly published Ecumenical translation (in French) of the Bible. This translation has the advantage of including for the first time the complete books of the Old Testament as recognised in the

canonical list practised by the Orthodox Church. It also incorporates the participation of specialists of the Church regarding translation, cartography, and edition of introductions and notes. It is concerning these new additions that Protestants, Catholics and Orthodox have come to intervene. Patriarch Bartholomew concluded by announcing that the end of the adventure of translation of Scriptures, an adventure common to all Christians, would not be realised with this new edition. Rather, the adventure would continue on as a search for greater understanding.

Following the academic session, an animated crowd gathered at the reception held by the Institute, which took place in the Church gardens.

ARCHBISHOP GABRIEL'S WELCOME SPEECH TO THE PATRIARCH

Your All Holiness,

It is a great honour for us to have the chance to receive you in our theological institute on the occasion of your visit to Paris to present the new edition of the Ecumenical Translation of the Bible. We are absolutely delighted to have you.

You know our faithfulness to the Oecumenical Patriarchate ever since His All Holiness Photios II received my predecessor of blessed memory, Metropolitan Evlogios, in 1931, under the omophorion of the Oecumenical Patriarchate. Our link with the Throne of Constantinople is essential for our existence, as you know.

All of my predecessors' declarations, since the courageous act by Metropolitan Eulogios in 1931, show that our canonical membership of the Oecumenical Patriarchate guarantees us communion with the whole Orthodox world and we can live here in France, and everywhere in Western Europe, in fruitful and brotherly cooperation with all the Orthodox communities of our countries.

It is in the heart of the Russian emigration that this theological school was founded, thanks to the generosity of the faithful and the brotherly help of our non-Orthodox Christian brothers. Allow me to express our gratitude for your paternal love and your material help to our Institute.

The centre exists for the theological training of Orthodox clergy: firstly for the pastoral needs of the Exarchate but the teaching staff have also helped to promote ecumenical dialogue. Some of them were invited to the Second Vatican Council and their theology often positively influenced the Council documents.

Your All Holiness,

Today, our Exarchate has become, in reality, multinational. It is thanks to the Russian Orthodox ecclesial tradition received from Metropolitan Evlogios and from his successors, that we are what we are. We are all indebted to them and we are all the agents of the inheritance that they passed on to us, which is the inheritance of the Russian tradition. This expresses



Arch. Gabriel

itself in the manner of celebrating the Liturgy, in singing, in the painting of icons, and in living the rhythm of the ecclesial year... I express to you our gratitude for the respect which the Great Church has always showed us. For our part, we make a commitment to continue our pastoral work under the omophorion of the Oecumenical Patriarchate, which never tried «to Hellenize» us but which frees us to continue to follow our vocation, to prepare the way for the establishment of a local Church, in communion of prayer and action with all the Orthodox people of this country.

Before finishing, I would like to call to mind some words of Olivier Clément (of happy memory): "Let us try to work together, each one enriching the others with their own heritage, in the framework of a modest, open and evangelical Orthodoxy, being convinced that the Tradition, to be alive, must be creative." I would also like to call to mind what Saint John of Kronstadt said: «the eucharist is a continual miracle». We can say the same thing of the Church: «She too is a continual miracle!» Marvelling before that which God offers us, and with gratitude, let us open the eyes of our heart in front of this miracle that is the Church, ancient and respectable and at the same time always young, always the same and at the same time always new.

Your All Holiness

I pray that God keeps you for many years for the well being of His holy Church. Eis polla eti, Despota!

+ Gabriel, Archbishop of Comana, Exarch of the Oecumenical Patriarch
Paris, Institute of Saint-Serge, 14th April, 2011



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