



My Beloved Ones,

Tomorrow, we will be blessed to commemorate our Lord's Ascension into Heaven 40 days after His Resurrection.

This means today is the Apodosis, that is, the leave-taking of the Fast of Pascha. Traditionally, this is the final day in which we chant or greet one another with *ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΝΕΣΤΗ*. To some, this might leave them with a sense of wishing for the Paschal joy to continue, but the Apodosis is not meant to be sorrowful, for tomorrow, we are deemed worthy to experience that great mystery of the Ascension.

Indeed, at His Ascension, our Lord demonstrates the fullness of the salvific plan: *"Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance and*

forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised, so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.' Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven." (Luke 23:46-51)

In our Lord's final moments on earth, all things are connected: He preaches to them of how the Law of Moses, the Psalms, and the Prophecies all foretold the coming of the Messiah; and now that He has fulfilled what was spoken, He looks ahead to the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, which in ten days' time will establish the Church here on earth.

In the Book of Acts, the Disciples continue to stare up into Heaven, perhaps feeling sad, as well hopeful. The Evangelist Luke tells us that, *"...two men in white robes stood by them. They said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.'" (Acts 1:10-11)* Therefore, we are not only encouraged but commanded to be joyful on this day, for this is not the end but only the beginning. Indeed, as our Lord tells His Disciples in Matthew's Gospel, *"And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age. Amen."* (Matthew 28:20)

+ALEXIOS

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