



# HOLY ORTHODOX METROPOLIS *of* BOSTON

*Under the Jurisdiction of the Holy Orthodox Church in North America*

## **PASCHAL ENCYCLICAL**

*of*

His Eminence Gregory, Metropolitan of Boston

*Christ is Risen from the dead,  
by death hath He trampled down death,  
and on those in the graves hath He bestowed life.*

Beloved Orthodox Christians,

With this triumphant hymn, the Church celebrates the Pascha of the Lord, proclaiming to all creation that Christ has defeated death, the seemingly invincible enemy of mankind. The Church teaches that death was trampled upon, not only by Christ's resurrection but also by His death. Indeed, rising from the dead with an incorruptible body over which death had no power any longer was the deadliest blow to death. However, victory over death was achieved on every level, through every angle, and in every dimension, not only by Christ's resurrection but also by His death. That is why, on Holy Saturday, when Christ rests bodily in the sepulchre, the Divine Services of the Church already express a feeling of triumph, a subdued sense of victory being wrought in quiet and in secret, which will burst into the open with Christ's arising.

But what was it about our Saviour's death that undid death itself? How did our Saviour trample upon death by His own death? The Fathers of the Church tell us that our Saviour's death was different to the death of other human beings, in both the spiritual and the corporeal understanding of death.

First, in the spiritual realm, when our Saviour's soul separated from His body, it was not taken captive to Hades, as was the case with the souls of all other human beings. Instead, our Saviour's soul descended into Hades as a liberator, shining His uncreated light on all who dwelt in that dark place and extending His hand to all who believed in Him, bringing them up into Paradise. We see death's power over the souls of the dead wane in the face of our Saviour's death.

Secondly, in the bodily sense, although Christ died, and His soul left His body, the latter was not subject to corruption, as naturally occurs with human beings in our fallen state. Corruption could not approach our Saviour's body because of His holiness. Thus, death was found powerless to subject Him to its corrupting power.

Finally, our Saviour's death overturned the very definition of death. Death is defined as the separation of soul and body. But in our Saviour's case, although He died, His soul and body were still united in His divinity, which did not leave either of them. Therefore, the very concept of death was undone by our Saviour's supernatural death.

278 Warren Street, Brookline, MA 02445

[www.bomb.org](http://www.bomb.org) ~ [t.me/HOMBoston](https://t.me/HOMBoston) ~ [info@bomb.org](mailto:info@bomb.org)

Thus, having met with a humiliating defeat when confronting our Saviour's soul and body separately, death was dealt a final and fatal blow by the reuniting of Christ's soul and body at His resurrection. Resurrection was the last and the greatest in a string of brilliant victories that death suffered by our Saviour's death.

Therefore, death has been truly trampled down by our Saviour's death and resurrection. This victory was won for our sake and to participate in it, we need to become one with this new, immortal, and incorruptible humanity of our Saviour. This is achieved by means of unity with the Church, which is Christ's body (that same body with which He died and rose again!), through constant participation in the Mysteries that the Church offers us, and by leading a life that makes such a continual participation possible.

May we all be deemed worthy of this by the power and mercy of our Risen Christ.

Beloved Orthodox Christians,

**Christ is Risen!**

**Truly He is Risen!**

With much love in our Risen Saviour,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gregory, Metropolitan of Boston". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

⌘ Gregory, Metropolitan of Boston

*Pascha 2023*