

Meditations Inspired by the Holy Week of Easter

THE CELEBRATION OF THE RESURRECTION AND THE REJOICING PROCESSIONS

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The Lord Jesus Christ came to earth the valley of tears, in order to carry us over and into the embrace of God the Father. He carries us within Him-the Source of joy- Who grants our souls joyfulness in spite of the pain pervading this world. We are to experience His Resurrection as being our own resurrection; and therefore enjoy the proof that the heavens have become open to us through His amazing redemption.

The Holy Week of Easter (Paschal/Passover) begins with joyful processions and ends with joyful celebrations due to the Lord's Resurrection. This joy flows over us and proceeds from His Cross, His Burial, His descent to hell, and His return with the trophies-the spirits of the dead- to Paradise.

Before celebrating the Passover, the Jews used to flood into Jerusalem with great rejoicing in order to celebrate that big event. They would come with huge numbers of sheep. These sheep reminded them of the happy exodus of God's people from Egypt; and the freedom from slavery to Pharaoh. At that time, they looked forward to enter the land they would own as an inheritance and where they would enjoy freedom. In this new land, they would establish the kingdom of Israel under the care of the King of Kings, and live in His heavenly shadow.

The Incarnated Word of God came to earth, the Lamb of God, the only ONE able to carry the sins of the whole world! What an immense differences between the procession of the lowly animals-the sheep-, which are offered during the Jewish Passover and the procession of the Lamb of God Who acts as our Passover forever.

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April 1999

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The Holy Week of Easter (Paschal Week) and The Rejoicing Processions

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I-Palm Sunday:

The Passover and Freedom

The object of God for the Passover in the Old Testament was to save His people under the leadership of the greatest of prophets-Moses-from slavery under Pharaoh. They were to cross the wilderness and travel towards the Promised Land. There they would experience perfect freedom and live as children and icons of God the Master of all creatures

This event was just a foreshadow of a greater Passover which is the crossing over of the whole of humanity from the slavery of sin into the joy of belonging to God and enjoying His righteousness and His gift of freedom

The Holy Passover and the Processions

What draws our attention at the beginning of the Holy Week is the rite that the church practices at this time of the year. It holds two processions: one is held on the eve of Palm Sunday; and another is held early on Palm Sunday. In order to understand the meaning of these two processions, we need to go back to the day when the Lord Jesus Christ entered into Jerusalem. There we would also see two processions: one is held to prepare the people for celebrating the Jewish Passover in its literal sense; while the other is held to prepare the whole world to celebrate the New Passover.

A-The Procession of the Sheep:

Before any celebrations began, the merchants brought huge numbers of sheep into Jerusalem. These were sold to enable each family to celebrate the Passover. In the case of poor families, a few would join and buy together one sheep. Each family is then bound by the Law to hold the Passover sheep for five days.

As was mentioned earlier, the sheep bring happy memories of the exodus of God's people from Egypt. A time when they were set free from slavery under Pharaoh, and when they were looking forward to enter the land they would own, and inherit. They would live in that land under the protection of God and in the shadow of Heaven itself.

B-The Procession of the Lamb of God:

The Incarnated Word of God came to earth as the Lamb of God. Only He could carry the sins of the whole world. What a vast difference between the procession of mere animals/sheep that are offered during the Jewish Passover and the procession of the Lamb of God Who is Himself our reason for everlasting celebration.

1-The sheep abound in great numbers. They are offered in celebration of the Passover and represent just a memory of an old event. **This may inspire hope but that would last for just one week.** Yet it fails to offer constant joy for believers. In contrast, the Lamb of God is our Passover and He has offered His Life just once. Yet He is capable of inspiring constant hope and joy in the hearts of believers and His joy will endure until we meet with Him in the clouds and **share eternal and heavenly bliss which no one can describe.**

2-The family would have to pick out the best sheep out of their flock or buy a young lamb. It had to be about a year old, and a male with no blemish. Thus they had to sacrifice a sheep of their flock, or they had to pay the price to buy one. In contrast, the Lamb of God came to us and offered Himself for free. Thus the sacrifice was offered by Him rather than by us. Due to His Divine Love, He desired to be sacrificed in order to save us by His redeeming Blood.

3-Every Jewish family, or more than one, would gather around the Passover sheep. In contrast, **the Lamb of God has gathered all believers from all nations into one family:** indeed, He has even embraced them with the heavenly hosts.

4-Every family was preoccupied with examining the Passover sheep, and they put aside the ones with any faults, even if they were very slight. In contrast, there was no one to examine the Lamb of God. In fact, He is the One Who examines the whole of humanity. He knows that all have become utterly corrupt, yet He has not put aside anyone, Moreover, He has not condemned anyone. On the contrary, He keeps renewing the nature of every one of us by His Holy Spirit: He sanctifies us and fills us with His glory!

5-The sheep that were chosen to be sacrificed had to be consumed completely on Passover day, and any leftovers were burned. In contrast, the amazing Lamb of God was never consumed; neither does He allow His followers to be consumed. Indeed, He came of His own free will to die, descended into hell and broke its locks, and carried to Paradise as trophies the souls of those who had died with hope in their hearts. Hell could not imprison Him, and even though He died physically, He arose. **Thus He has ended the rule of death over us, and has granted us life everlasting and victory over death.**

C-An Amazing and Joyful Procession Of the Church

In the past, the Jews used to go to Jerusalem in huge processions in order to offer the sacrifices of praise in the form of the Passover sheep, and this filled them with joy. In contrast, in the Church in the New Testament all true believers have become one heavenly procession that enjoys spiritual joy. This is no longer a procession travelling towards an earthly Jerusalem, or seeking to go there to kill the sheep in celebration of a feast. It is a procession of the whole Church, under the leadership of Jesus Christ Himself Who is the slaughtered Lamb. Through Him, the soul finds joy as it joins in the crucifixion with the Lord Who is its head. Then the soul can say with the apostle: "For Your sake we are killed all day long"; and also: "...that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,"(Phil 3:10). It is a sacrificial/paschal procession in which the Head and the body join together in true Love. There is such a great difference between the unique and singular slaughter of the Head, and the continuous slaughter of the members!

The Coptic Church expresses the important significance of this procession, which it believes to extend eternally, by observing the rite of holding two processions: one on the eve of Palm Sunday and the other after the raising of incense on Palm Sunday

First: The church procession on the eve of Palm Sunday

The Cross is held in front of the procession, followed by two banners and then the deacons. They enter into the sanctuary, and rotate around the altar three times, then proceed into the nave of the church and finally enter into the sanctuary to rotate just once more around the altar.

- The three rotations that take place around the altar symbolize that the Church starts its journey from heaven itself, where the Trinity dwells. She receives from God Himself the honor of fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ-the true Sacrifice-and of sharing His sufferings and His glory.
- The rotations in the nave of the church are meant to underline that the church's congregation enjoy the fellowship of suffering with the true sacrificial Lamb.
- Returning to the sanctuary at the end of the procession symbolizes that the procession is a heavenly one that finally rests in the embrace of God.

Second: The Church Procession Held after the Raising of Incense on Palm Sunday

During the vespers held on the eve of Palm Sunday, we enjoy the procession that seems to proceed from heaven and which also ends in heaven Early on the next day, we have the second procession which resembles the previous one, yet has a difference as certain stops are made, namely the following:

- A stop at the royal entrance in front of the sanctuary: all the gates of eternity are opened up before the procession that is led by the Resurrected One The whole congregation join with the heavenly hosts in praise of the Resurrected paschal Lamb
- A stop before the icon of the holy Virgin Mary: here the redeeming Messiah is worshipped, and St Mary is blessed for being chosen by the Holy Spirit of God. She therefore deserves to be in the forefront of the procession She is the ideal member of the suffering Church whose heart has been pierced by a sharp sword, yet has not lost her joy.
- A number of stops are made before the icons of the archangels Michael and Gabriel, etc., as the current believers seek to establish reciprocal love with God's heavenly servants and His holy apostles; and aspire to the Bridegroom/the Lamb of God. In other words, the congregation seeks to join all those who desire to be brethren and join the Lamb in a spirit of love. Then all will rejoice together.
- A number of stops are made before the icons of prophets, apostles, disciples, martyrs, and anchorites, as well as before the icon of St John the Baptist Thus all the believers from the Old and New Testament join and share the joy of salvation
- A stop is made in front of the doors of the church. This is a sign that the procession recognizes that God's arms are open to everyone: He gladly embraces anyone, from any nation, who accepts the invitation to come in.
- A stop is made before the baptismal font: here God is worshipped as He has created the Church to be a child bearing Mother. She is constantly able to give birth to children of God; and they become living members in the victorious and rejoicing procession.

Thus all processions in the Old and New Testament bear the spirit of joy as the Lord Who is Himself the Passover leads them. Our good Savior is the Source of true joy; and He grants us fellowship in His heavenly glory

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+Thousands and thousands of sheep were slaughtered,
And so gave joy only to the Jews and for just one week.
O Lamb of God, of your own free will and to please Your Father
You have come forward to be slaughtered;
And thus you have granted the whole world everlasting joy,
While the heavenly ones rejoiced

+ The Jewish families examined the sheep to discard the ones with any blemish
Whereas You, O Lamb of God, examines us
Not to condemn or to discard us

But to sanctify, and renew our nature, and to rejoice on account of our salvation
From all nations, You establish us into one family- a heavenly family!

+The Jewish families used to choose a sheep out of their flock, or buy one, to be sacrificed

Whereas You, O amazing Lamb of God, offered Yourself freely to be sacrificed on behalf of the world!

Could the lowly animals/sheep have reconciled us with God, and granted us the freedom granted by heaven?!

You alone can reconcile us with God, Your Father, and You alone can bring us into the glorious freedom granted to God's children!

+The sacrificial sheep used to be consumed by the fire, or by burning the remains

Whereas You, O amazing Lamb of God, could not be touched by the fire of hell

You arose powerfully, and have granted us Your resurrected and joyous life

+O Lord, You are the joy of my heart, and Your resurrection is the secret of that joy,

O thou Redeemer of the world

Your sufferings grant life, and Your Cross is the Source of true glory

Your resurrection grants resurrection to my heart, thoughts, and my innermost depths

Your resurrection has insured the resurrection of my body too so that it may share with my soul all the joyful glory

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II-The Eve of Holy Paschal Monday

The Paschal Celebration and the Procession of Glory

During the Holy Paschal Week, the Coptic Church abstains from reciting the canonical prayers. This lends the holy paschal procession a form of worship that has its own characteristic rites. These enable the whole body of believers to proceed onto the road to Gethsemane, and from there to the tomb of the Savior where they will rise with Him.

Characteristics of this procession:

A-No candles are lit in front of the icons of the saints or the angels. This is a sign that nothing else preoccupies the heart of the church other than praising the True Passover Who is Jesus Christ the Lord: the Giver of inner glory, the Source of worship and rejoicing,

B-All the church is decorated with black banners marked with white crosses, This is intended to proclaim grief over sins, and failures enacted by the body of believers. However, the cheerful Cross brightens them and thereby transforms the darkness and brings daylight into our daily lives; and our hardships are transformed by heavenly consolations.

C-This is the procession of children who gladly suffer and thereby offer the greatest sacrifice to God. It is a sacrifice that consists of worship, praise, and giving glory to God Who grants adoption and salvation to believers. At six o'clock, on holy paschal Monday, the church sings with the psalmist, saying:

Give unto the Lord glory and strength

Give unto the Lord the glory due to His name

Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness', (Ps28: 1,2)

D-The Subject of Worship of this Amazing Procession:

(i)-Thine is the Power: No one can worship the Lord with his/her whole being if it is without the experience of that power deep down within oneself God is All-powerful and Almighty. Besides, He grants His loved ones the power and creates power out of all our weaknesses; and out of all that is bitter, He creates sweetness. It is as though the procession is saying with the prophet" Let the weak say-'I am strong'," (Joel: 3:16).

(ii)-Thine is the Glory: God is all- glorious and this proceeds from within Him. All the heavenly hosts therefore desire to glorify Him. As His glory is reflected upon us, we also desire to shout out of our depths and say;" Thine is the glory!"

(iii)-Thine is the Blessing: Due to His divine presence, God renders the heavens to be a blessed place. As we accept Him to live within us, we are enabled to enjoy a divine life and experience a kind of blessing that transcends any worldly happiness

(iv)-Thine is the Majesty: God is the Kings of kings. When we are united with Him, we become kings. Through our own choice, we were humiliated and enslaved. Through Him, we have now attained heavenly and kingly majesty.

(v)- As the procession of the church offers this praise to the Savior, the Lord is called, 'Emmanuel'. Isaiah, the prophet, first used this title when he spoke of His birth from a Virgin, without a human seed, (...). Isaiah is known for his prophecies concerning the Cross, and he clearly foretold not only the crucifixion, but all the implications of the heavenly mission as well, (Is 53). Consequently, Isaiah experienced the power of life with the Lord and called Him 'Emmanuel', which means 'God with us'.

For thirty-three years, the Lord walked among mankind. He dwelled among us, and shared everything with us except sin: He was conceived, and delivered in birth, He was breast fed, He hungered and ate, He experienced thirst and drank, He got tired and felt sad, He rejoiced in the spirit, and He toiled. This is God Who lived among us while constantly doing good works. Through His Cross, He opened our hearts so that he might enter within and He never wishes to forsake us. We can understand the implications of the title 'Emmanuel' 'only through the Cross.

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+ Thank You, O Emmanuel, my Lord

Through Your Cross, You live in me and I in You

Through Your Cross, I have become a member in the glorious procession, which ends before Your divine throne.

+Thine is the power, for You have transformed my human weakness into power

I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me!

+ Thine is the glory, for You have borne my nakedness on the Cross

Instead of leaving me under the curse inflicted for breaking the Law, You have granted me fellowship in Your glorious kingdom

+Thine is the blessing, O Thou Who grants blessings

You have attained the divine courts after passing through the bitterness of the valley of tears

+Thine is the majesty, O King of kings

You have become a slave, and were sold for thirty pieces of silver

In order to transfer me from slavery to kingship

You have turned me into a king with power

For I can order thoughts to depart and they would leave me

Or tell certain ones to enter and they would come in

I have control over my body, thoughts, and sentiments

Who can now enslave me, O King of kings!

I have received the spirit of royalty from Your hands!

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III- The Eve Of Holy Paschal Tuesday

Cover My Nakedness so I Could Join Your Glorious Procession

The celebration of the Passover enacts our transition or passing over from a state of slavery into a state of freedom; and from being earthly creatures into heavenly ones. Consequently, the procession must of necessity have two objectives; a positive one and a negative one:

- The departure and disengagement from slavery; and an acceptance and enjoyment of the glory as God's children
- The rejection of all that is earthly; and the practical embrace of the heavens and all aspects of a heavenly life.

- The crucifixion of the old man and the deadening of all his deeds; and responding to God as the new man develops in His image.
- Tearing away the shame of sin; and accepting the glory and righteousness of the crucified Messiah, Who has risen from the dead.

This is what the Lord Jesus Christ wished to confirm when He entered Jerusalem, and as He purified the Temple and threw out the merchants selling pigeons and the money peddlers. He wished to establish within us a holy altar for Him. If the pigeons are seen as a symbol of the Holy Spirit, yet God will not allow His spirit to be abused. It is as though we call on God, not because we seek His very Own Being, but because we wish to fulfil our own ends. It would also seem as though His Gifts are more important than His Own Being. The same applies if we worship Him in order to receive His blessings for the work we do, while He is not the focus of our yearnings or our love. It would look like a bride who wants the gifts of her bridegroom, but cannot stand him or his conversation.

It was most necessary to eradicate all the corruption that had invaded the temple and all the ways in which it had been misused so that it would be a truly holy place for God.

The Lord cursed the fig tree because it had leaves which made it appear to be fruitful, yet it had no fruit That tree died, so that in its place the tree of the Cross would be planted within us This tree will grant us life, and will offer us the fruits of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, goodness, longsuffering, kindness, faithfulness, gentle-ness, and self-control, (Gal 5:23).

This is exactly what the Leader of our procession, our Lord Jesus Christ, has done. He started with pulling out and cleaning up before undertaking the task of planting, and He destroyed in order to construct. He wishes to discard our shame in order to grant and enable us to carry His glory, holiness, and righteousness within us.

Every member united with the Savior strives to achieve this goal. Both those children who rested in hope since Old Testament times, as well as those of the New Testament who enjoy the presence of the Lord and Leader of the procession.

Jeremiah, the prophet, was told: “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you.... To root out and to pull down, to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant”, (Jer.1: 5,10).

Through such tasks, the universal Church becomes the Lord’s glorious procession; and each member too becomes individually a procession on his/her own launched gloriously towards the heavens!

A Glorious Inner Procession!

When the will becomes sanctified and accepts the Cross of the Lord to work from within, then every cause for shame or corruption will be eliminated from man’s potentials and abilities. Ultimately, the believer is transformed as (s)he experiences an inner procession of glory and joy.

Instead of corrupt senses, there will be sanctified feelings

Instead of unclean emotions, there will be powerful sentiments yearning for glory

Instead of thoughts directed to earthly matters, they will be raised towards eternity

Instead of the lax and heavy body, there will be a body which is carried by the Spirit and which is therefore as light as the clouds.

This is how the Spirit of God works with the power of the Cross and through the precious Blood that can establish a joyful procession. In that procession, the Spirit unites with the body and soul. All their potentials, capacities and talents are combined in an amazing harmony that produces a wonderful symphony of love and of unending praise. Finally, the believers will meet with the heavenly ones on the great Day of the

Lord. This will be an echo of the procession that has been experienced in one's earlier life on earth.

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+May Your fiery Spirit work in my depths

May Your Cross amputate every corruption, shame and impurity

May Your righteousness, holiness, and glory be implanted within me

That I may become a glorious procession under Your Leadership, O Bearer of our shame!

+Your fiery Spirit embraces me

I become steadfast in You and You in me

I walk with a glorious evangelical spirit, under Your leadership O Giver of victory!

I await our flight with our loved ones

Thus, I do not see two processions: one for mankind, and another for the heavenly ones

But I see all taking part together in the glorious and eternal procession!

+What overwhelming love, O You Who are supreme and amazing in glory!

For You have demolished every shame in order to establish Your glory within us and make it our own!

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IV-The Eve of Holy Paschal Wednesday

Processions of Glorious and Joyful Knowledge:

The Procession of the Repentant

In the first sermon given in the first hour of holy Tuesday, we hear the following:

+All those who are repentant during their lifetime bring joy to the heavens, and will not have any sadness or pain in that place which has been promised to them for an inheritance. Have you not heard the Lord's words:" Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted..."For this will be the time when the weak shall put on strength, and when the one who has no strength will say:" I am strong " since (s) he has opened the heart to the written Word.

It has been written, about those who persevere: Hurry up, and correct yourself to be a pure vessel for God, a doer who will not be turned away, and upholding the word of truth, (Abba St Shenouda).

The procession of the church, which is united with the Lord Jesus Christ Who is our Passover, is a procession of repentant believers. By their sincere repentance, they bring joy to the heavenly ones. Although they mourn, yet their mourning is accompanied by hope. Therefore they are spiritually supported. Instead of weakness, they receive strength from on high. They became the dearly beloved and pure children of God. They toil in glory and have nothing to be ashamed of as a result of the power of the Word.

This amazing procession which is filled by the Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin, (Jn 16:8), and enjoys the knowledge and mysteries of God. It is on the eve of holy Paschal Wednesday that Jesus revealed to His disciples the mysteries of His Kingdom that grant eternal joy.

This is the procession of the bride as she ascends to the heavenly bridal home. The wise King Solomon described that as he says:" Who is this coming out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh, frankincense, with all the merchant's fragrant powders?" (Song of Sol: 3:10). This is the Bride to whom the Bridegroom opens up His Heart and to Whom He faithfully reveals all His innermost mysteries.

The Procession of the Children of Light

The prophecies read in the eleventh hour on Tuesday begin with a reading that reveals the nature of this procession. It is described as one on which the Sun of Righteousness shines:

" Moreover the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be sevenfold.. (Is 30: 26).

"For the commandment is a lamp and the law is light," (Prov 6:23).

The Lord enlightens believers with His knowledge so they are enabled to understand His mysteries. As for those who do not join the procession, they hear the Lord's words and which we repeat at the sixth hour on that day, saying:" ...you do not know where I come from, and where I am going.... You know neither Me nor My Father.."(Jn 8: 14,19).

Thus, on the eve of holy paschal Wednesday, we read many passages that speak about wisdom and knowledge. This serves to underline the nature of the procession as one whose members enjoy the light of Divine Wisdom.

The Knowledge of the Mysteries of the Divine Kingdom

As we walk in the procession of light and ascend away from the wilderness, we carry the fragrant smell of the Lord and get acquainted with our Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Kingdom that we will inherit. He reveals to us the following mysteries:

1-His Kingdom is the House of wisdom: Anyone who possesses it will enjoy its eternal and heavenly banquet, (Prov: 9). This is the Kingdom of the wise who have attained true divine wisdom.

2-A Strategy for Judging Mankind: Those who carry the features of the Lord within them, that is the faithful ones, hear His Divine voice saying: "Well done, good and faithful servant, you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord," (Matt25: 21, 23). Those who bring the Lord's fellowship and gentleness to others can see His person in the poor, the strangers, and the prisoners. To such believers the Lord says: "Come you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me....inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My Brethren, you did it to Me,"(Matt 25: 35-40).

3-The Kingdom is a Joyful Wedding Celebration: It is enjoyed by all who respond to the invitation. On the other hand, those who despise the call are deprived of all joy, (Matt22: 1-14).

4-The Kingdom arrives by Surprise: (Matt24: 26 etc.).

5-The Kingdom is the Wedding of the Five Wise Virgins: These sanctified their five senses and dedicated themselves anxiously to get ready to enter into the heavenly home of their Bridegroom. Foolish virgins can have no share in that kingdom. It is truly a procession of the simple Nevertheless; it is not a procession of the foolish who lack knowledge.

6-A Procession that is not foreign to us: Neither is it far removed from us. On the contrary, it moves towards us so that we could join and embrace Him in our depths. Thus, at the end of the prophecies read today, we hear the following:

Wisdom is faster than all that moves

It attains and transcends everything due to her purity

For she is the radiation of God's power

And she is the abundance overflowing from the splendor

And holy glory which belong to the Creator of all things...

And has the power to renew all things...

Through all generations she resides within the pure souls

And grants them fellowship with God, as she changes them into prophets

For He loves only those who follow wisdom

For she is brighter than the sun

And loftier than any position in the galaxy

If she is measured against the light, she will outdo it

For the light is followed by night

As for wisdom, darkness cannot overtake her.

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+Grant me, O Lord a share in the procession of the repentant

Externally, there is wailing, and sadness, and crucifixion

And internally, there is joy and exultation, and resurrection

May I crucify the acts of the old man by repentance

And may my depths awaken to enjoy the joy and the power of Your resurrection

I have lived until now as a child of darkness

May Your light shine on my face and within me, O Sun Of Righteousness

Then my wounds will be healed and I will be relieved of the darkness

And You shall make me a child of the Light

+Enlighten me, O Lord with Your wisdom which is brighter than the sun
Make me possess that within me as she is outshines all the lights of the world!
May I enjoy her since she seeks me
She calls in the streets and all the alleys, and says:
He who is ignorant, let him turn to me
It is amazing that Your wisdom has been tirelessly seeking
To find a resting place in the hearts of men ever since the first generations
Indeed, The Son of Man has no place!
May You come into my humble heart, O wisdom and holy Word together with God's
amazing Son!
+Grant me Your kingdom, O my Savior
It is the house of wisdom, so may I enter and enjoy the heavenly banquet
It is a heavenly and royal wedding that occurs suddenly
May I be vigilant and ready to join it
It is a wedding that brings joy to You and me, for you have asked me to be Yours
You yearn to unite with me, O You Who are too great for the world to contain!
This is the wedding of the wise virgins
Make me like the wise virgins blessed with sanctified senses and ready with the oil of
love
May You desire to meet and be united with me
+ Your kingdom is not far removed from me
It is within my heart as a result of the work of Your fiery Spirit
That Spirit reigns within me
And enflames my desire to meet You face to face!
You have granted me the promise
When will I attain the perfect glory that You have prepared for me! Then will I rejoice
with You and nothing could ever tear away my eternal joy!

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V- Holy Paschal Thursday

The Procession of Disgraceful Treason

The procession of the Light proceeds openly, and consists of heavenly as well as earthly members. Many do not realize the greatness and glory of this procession. In contrast and opposing this great one, there is another procession, which is moving under the cover of the night and in the darkness. This second one is being planned and aims to destroy the procession of light. In the procession of light, there are the repentant ones who pray for union with the Leader of the procession, wish to bear His features, and be considered His children in spite of their constant failings. In the procession of darkness, there are the evil ones who are allied with their covert leader, Satan, the destroyer of all goodness. Even though they carry some naturally good features, they are the children of the devil, as they imitate him and do his will.

While the Lord Jesus Christ was leading His Church on the narrow road of the Cross; the enemy of goodness was leading the various Jewish leaders and brought them to work together with the disloyal traitor Judas, in spite of their different and conflicting views.

The Procession of Judas, the Traitor

On holy paschal Thursday, the church celebrates the holy Eucharist Liturgy. The Redeemer of the world has established this as a covenant between the Father and all believers and through the Unique Sacrifice and precious Blood. Before the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, a procession is held that proceeds contrary to all processions

held throughout the year. In this procession, the clergy and the deacons proceed in the opposite and inverse direction, and this is known as the 'rotation of Judas, the traitor'. The procession does not begin or end in the sanctuary, and it faces the south as it goes around the nave of the church. This points to Judas who turned his back on heaven and broke the divine covenant even though he was a disciple of the Lord.

The procession sings in a special sad tune, and shouts bitterly: "Judas, Judas, O enemy of the law, you have sold the Lord Jesus to the Jews who are enemies of the law". The song does not end with reproaching Judas, for it proceeds to proclaim the redeeming work of God that can use even this procession for the salvation of mankind. This is the procession of the church that is sad over mankind's rejection of the Savior. The church grieves and shouts as she yearns for all to experience the joy of salvation.

The Savior and the Procession of Treason

All the evil powers united together against our Savior. They formed a procession of traitors. However, the Lord does not meet treason with hatred. On the contrary, He yearns for the redemption of every one. He works constantly to attract every member to step out from the procession of traitors and join the procession of the Light.

What has the Savior Offered to Sinners?

1-**He kneels down lovingly and wishes to wash our feet** which have sunk into the earth and have become soiled with sin. He wishes to wash not only the feet, but also man's whole internal being. He will use His sacrificial Blood to wash each one and transform him/her into a righteous child of God, and thus be qualified to join the joyful procession of the Church as she marches towards the Throne.

This is the mission of the Savior. He kneels in humility to wash feet; and He allows only those who are united with Him to do the same. Such followers are filled with His Spirit and are inwardly humble. They too are desirous that everyone would join in the glorious procession.

Through the Lord's act of washing feet, we learn that the greatest person is the one who kneels next to the smallest or less important individual in order to carry out the Lord's mission and so serve the greatest One of all.

The Lord Jesus Christ has transformed our life into an amazing race, as we all seek to partake of a particular majesty. This majesty does not have the worldly connotations of egoism, pride, power, or vainglory. It is the majesty according to the Lord's demonstration of love, humility, and relinquishing our presumed rights.

2-**The Lord willingly offered His life to be a new Passover for His disciples**. He changes the bread and wine into His Body and Blood to be sacrificed for the redemption of the whole world.

Kneeling down and washing feet was not enough, for the Lord went on and offered His Body and Blood as a dowry for His heavenly Bride who would be a Queen with sovereignty.

The Lord does not call the sinner from the procession of the corrupt in order to reprimand, reproach, or embarrass him. He calls to invite the sinner to a new procession where he can become wholly sanctified and qualified to be an heir to the kingdom of God. The Lord tenderly invites the unclean spirit covered with impure blood, and says:

"You were not washed in water to cleanse you; you were not rubbed with salt nor swathed in swaddling clothes.

No eye pitied you...

You were thrown into the open field...
 And when I passed by you and saw you struggling in your own blood...
 When I passed you again ...indeed your time was the time of love
 So I spread my wing over you, and covered your nakedness
 Yes, I swore an oath to you and entered a covenant with you, and you became mine,"
 says the Lord God.
 " Then I washed you in water
 Yes, I thoroughly washed off your blood and I anointed you with oil
 I clothed you in embroidered clothes and gave you sandals of badger skin
 I clothed you with fine linen and covered you with silk
 I adorned you with ornaments...
 And put a beautiful crown on your head...
 You were exceedingly beautiful and succeeded to royalty
 Your fame went out among the nations, because of your beauty for it was perfect
 through My splendor which I had bestowed on you," says the Lord, (Ezk 16:414).
 The King stretches out His hand to everyone and prays all to become qualified and
 enjoy union with Him. He calls, saying:" This is My blood of the new covenant,
 which is shed for many,"(Mk 14: 24).
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3- **The Dedication of all the Potentials for this Tremendous Messianic Mission:**

The task of attracting souls from the procession of the corrupt over into the procession of the righteousness of Christ cannot be done by human beings. Only Christ Himself can do this. He either operates alone, or through His disciples, or His beloved ones, or through every soul that desires to witness for His joyful message.

Judas paid no attention to Jesus as He knelt to wash his feet, nor did he get involved in enjoying the Body and Blood to be shed for his redemption. He just ran to the leaders of the Jews, and helped them to achieve their plans to kill Jesus and destroy all His work. However, Jesus Christ does not cease to devote all His potentials to attract souls to the victorious and joyful procession.

As the Lord Jesus Christ spoke to His disciples and gave them his final commandments, He animated their hearts with love, (Jn 13:34), and prayed them to be ready to offer their lives in order to bring redemption to their brothers. He promised to support them through the divine potentials that would be granted to them as they went about witnessing and attracting souls so that all may partake of their joy in Him:

- He offered **Himself**, so that they may abide in Him and He in them, (Jn15: 4-6). This is important since without Him they would not be able to accomplish anything. In contrast, abiding in and through Him, they would be enabled to complete His mission.
- He granted them the **Holy Spirit** Who will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment, (Jn 16:7-11). It is the Holy Spirit Who will testify for Him, (Jn 15:24), will glorify Him, (Jn16: 14), and will guide to all truth, (Jn 16:13).
- They realized that this was the Lord's farewell speech when He spoke about His **Father** This was in the form of a farewell prayer, as He said: Glorify Your Son, that He may also glorify You, (Din 17:1). This is the ultimate glory of the eternal Son: that as the heavenly ones glorify Him with the Father, all his beloved human creatures partake of this glory through His Cross!

Consequently, all members in the procession of the Light realize that even though they are dedicated to witness to the gospel truth, yet it is ultimately the work of the

Holy Trinity. Through Him they will endeavor to draw all souls away from the evil procession. It is the Holy Trinity Who acts so that the Father glorifies His Son as He seeks to redeem mankind, and the Son sacrifices Himself on man's behalf, and the Holy Spirit convicts, guides, and leads them to the truth. In other words, it is the work of the Holy Trinity that leads all to the joyful procession of salvation and divine knowledge.

4-The Lord intercedes in prayer on behalf of His disciples in Gethsemane:

The Lord Jesus Christ took His disciples to the garden of Gethsemane; then He picked out three of them and moved a little distance away from the rest- probably those were the ones closest to Him. However, as the hour when He had to drink the cup on behalf of sinners drew nearer, the Lord moved away to be completely alone. When He returned, He found the disciples asleep, for they were unable to keep vigil with Him- not even for one hour.

Earlier on, the Lord had told them: ". you will leave Me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me". It was impossible for a disciple, prophet, angel, or cherub to represent mankind and intercede before God. Therefore the Lord Jesus Christ comes alone before the Almighty, and carries every sinner along, and pleads on his behalf, saying: " Father, save Me from this hour", (Jn12: 27).

- You have saved me from the sense of isolation: I suffer for sin has isolated me from the Source of my life. Our Lord Jesus Christ will not be isolated from the Father and He will not suffer from isolation as He confirms in His words: " I am not alone". However, the sinner who recognizes His Deliverer cries out saying: " Save me from the isolation into which I have fallen".
- You have saved me from the cup of sin, for no sinner can ever pay its price. However, our Lord Jesus Christ desired to drink that cup and pay the price on our behalf!
You have saved me from wounds that may be inflicted by loved ones for sin has corrupted the environment of love among mankind. However, Christ, Who is without sin, has come to carry this guilt on our behalf! His relatives accused Him of being insane. He came to His own people, but they rejected Him. His disciple, Judas, betrayed Him; and Peter denied Him three times in spite of his deep attachment to the Lord. He was taken before the criminal court as one who had done evil and He was accused of blasphemy. The soldiers mocked Him; the servants of the high priest struck Him Who had come to redeem them; while the crowds chose to liberate Barabbas rather than set Him free. Yet the Lord accepted all these injuries to save us sinners!
- You have saved me from moments of divine anger for You have carried the sins of the whole world. You have pleased God and obeyed Him with Your own ill and so all cause of anger was erased!
- You have saved me from death for You are the living God Who never dies! You have put on our flesh to carry our death in Your Body and to grant us Your resurrection
This is what our Lord has done to rescue each one of us out of the procession of the ungrateful and the treacherous. He wants us to join the procession that reflects love, thanksgiving, and divine glory

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+ The heavenly ones live in great glory and walk in a grand procession...
Through Your love, you have called me to be Your procession
My whole soul and body with all my potentials soar upward toward the heavens
And I carry before me the banner of Your love
+ I have unwisely chosen to reject Your Love
And joined the procession of deadly corruption
The heavenly ones mourn and cry on my account
Yet who can save me but You?!

+ Through vanity, I have become a procession of corruption
Yet with amazing humility You kneel down to wash me with Your pure hands
You have offered and shed Your Body and Blood for me
Through Them I live steadfastly in You and You in Me
You have granted me Your Holy Spirit to convict me and to renew my nature
And so I am carried into the procession of joyful redemption!

+ May I experience the joy of Your salvation
Hence I will not stop from witnessing before all mankind
And I will share Your desire to sacrifice in order to bring life to all
I will not stop from praying and striving until all rejoice in Your salvation

+ May I come in as it were in Gethsemane
And see the weakness of my brothers as though they were mine
My soul groans every time corruption touches my brother
When will the whole world turn to the procession of Your love!
When will the procession of evil crumble down and when will all be saved?!

When will all be like a bride taking flight from the wilderness
To ascend towards You with the help of Your Holy Spirit
Carrying Your sweet smelling perfume
And resting in the embrace of Your Father?!

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VI-The Day of the Great Redemption

The Procession of the Cross: When the time came for Christ to carry His Cross to redeem all His beloved ones, a number of processions hastened towards Him.

1-The Procession of Enraged Masses:

“And while He was still speaking, behold, Judas, one of the twelve, with a great multitude carrying swords and clubs, came from the chief priests and elders of the people. Now His betrayer had given them a sign, saying” Whomsoever I kiss, He is the One, seize Him”, (Matt 26: 47,48).

Jesus said to the multitudes, “Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me? I sat daily with you, teaching in the temple, and you did not seize Me. But all this was done that the Scriptures and the prophets might be fulfilled”. Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled, (Matt 26: 55,56).

A-In this procession, all the evil powers conspired together. The crowds are ignorant of the truth. The chief priests and elders are filled with envy and hatred. The ungrateful disciple, greedy for silver and disloyal to his Master, chooses to kiss Him to conceal the betrayal and treachery.

The oppressive darkness could not stand the Light; therefore the ruler of darkness aroused his followers. He led those who submit to him to cooperate to get rid of the Light. He was unaware that what he did only helped to destroy his power. He actually helped to release those he had enslaved, as they would have the chance to become children of the Light.

Every time we meet with our Lord, and every time we lift our hearts up to the heavenly One, the enemy of goodness directs all his forces against us fiercely. He cannot watch helplessly for he constantly arouses and leads processions of agitated masses against the children of the Light.

We do not fear such processions that work on Satan’s behalf due to their enslavement to him. We know that these agitated followers will ultimately get converted and become victorious. This will be our crown of glory as we will taste new depths of the procession composed of the joyous children of the Light.

B- Although Satan and all his forces, consisting of evil angels and corrupt human beings, had full freedom and could embark on any act without any constraints; yet all their acts were in the knowledge of God even before they took place. Nothing ever happens by chance or without God’s planning. This is what comforts us in the midst of the constant wars waged between the processions of Light and of darkness.

In the Gospel of Saint Matthew, Jesus says “that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled.”(Matt 26: 56). Truly God has revealed to His prophets the events of the Cross, and they have recorded all in great detail. Now as we also unite with the holy Crucified One, we realize that our God knows about our struggles and has put a divine plan to bring us into glory.

C-It is fit and worthy of us to realize that we are neither involved nor are we a party in the battle that is being waged between the two processions. Indeed, it is a battle waged between God and Satan only. As for us, we are entitled to choose to hide in God, our Savior or to hide in the enemy of goodness.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Leader of the battle. Indeed, He is the warrior embracing and shielding us within Him. Consequently the enemy is unable to touch us!

D-A Procession carrying the semblance of legality: The masses were angry at the Lord Who walked among them doing good deeds. Probably many of them had joined the procession without even knowing why the crowds were against Jesus. This is what

Saint Paul, the apostle realized when he said that through the ignorance of man, Jesus Christ was persecuted, insulted, and condemned.

The procession appeared to be both a religious and a political one. The masses had been stirred as a result of a plan conceived by the highest religious leaders, the 'chief priests and the elders of the people', and supported by the chief Pharisees and Sadducees, as well as the scribes and Herodians. The officers representing the official authorities joined the masses too. The Lord Jesus Christ was judged before a religious court as well as a civil one. The political authorities condemned him and the religious leaders approved the verdict that He should be crucified.

In every generation, there are corrupt processions that simulate or fake religious identity and so convince those who commit crimes against members in the Body of Christ that they are doing a service for God. Moreover, they often simulate an official identity too. This enables them to accuse the children of the Light of national treason and evil conspiracy.

Such a procession always claims to be loyal to the country, the government, the constitution, and all the laws.

Loyalty to the country: 'Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said: " What shall we do? For this Man works many signs. If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take over both our titles and our nation". And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them: "You know nothing at all, nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people and not that the whole nation should perish," (Jn11: 47-50).

Loyalty to religion: " Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying; "He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Look, you have now heard His blasphemy,"(Matt 26:65).

Loyalty to the king or president: "... forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ, a King, (Lk23:2). " The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar!"(Jn 19:15).

They sought to remove His Body from the Cross before the night because it was the Preparation Day, that is the day before the Sabbath and it was not right to leave a body on the wood! They were careful to follow the literal meaning of the law, but they did not care to break the divine covenant Himself!

2-An Invisible Heavenly Procession:

While the dark forces constituting the evil procession were doing everything possible to oppose the procession of the Light, the heavenly ones were astonished and wondered :”How dared the followers of Satan oppose the Divine Word?” How did the children of man dare to cooperate and conspire against their Creator?”

In the garden of Gethsemane, an angel appeared to the Lord to strengthen Him, and worshipped Him, saying:” Thine is the power”. Indeed, as the events unfolded in the conspiracy, the trial, the crucifixion, and the resurrection, the divine ones worshipped the All-Powerful Who revealed through weakness that which is far greater than power!

Similarly, when we are opposed by Satan and all his devastating procession, the Lord sends His angels to embrace and serve us, for the Bible says:” The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him and delivers them,”(Ps 34:7).

3-A Joyful Procession in the Lower Dark Places:

As the features of the Cross begin to appear, and the events of the great Redemption become evident, the perception of the early fathers gains clarity. They perceive the meanings of events and symbols as they are being fulfilled in Christ. Now, they realize what many of their contemporaries had foretold.

It seems to me that a new procession - consisting of all the believers who lived in the times depicted in the Old testament, (the men, women, children, the young and old), formed, at this point They looked on at the events unfolding on our earth as affecting their own being too. They looked on with hope as they watch the Savior and Redeemer. They were innocent prisoners waiting for a verdict, and now events favored them. They were living in expectancy for the legal procedures, and now they would be set free and they would soon be on their way to Paradise.

They had been given the hope of being innocent through the Blood of Jesus Christ even before the Cross. Yet, that hope could never be fulfilled except through the shedding of the precious Blood on the Cross, and the Lord’s Spirit entering into Hades to carry their souls as His trophy. They were the trophies of love and they were joyous and thankful for the Lord’s redeeming work.

In the center of this procession is David, the prophet and king, who is an example of those who waited hopefully. What were his feelings as the promises made to him and his fathers and children were being fulfilled? He surely moved towards the Cross in great joy!

4-The Procession of Events and Prophecies:

The men of the Old Testament perceived events of the past and the prophecies as if they were a procession led by the Lord and preparing the way to His crucifixion. They see the following:

- Adam and Eve hiding behind the skin of the slain lamb
- Isaac presented as an offering by Abraham, the father of all fathers.
- Joseph, sold as a slave by his brothers.
- Moses, leading the people of God from the land of slavery and saved through the blood of the Passover
- The safe crossing of the people while Pharaoh and his army are drowned.

Endless incidents that have no value except when seen in the context of the events leading to the crucifixion of the Lord of glory!

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+O Lord, You have created me in Your image so that I might be part of the joyful heavenly procession

Through my own choice, I have corrupted my nature

And turned my life into an ignorant procession resisting the Truth!

+You have come for my sake to resurrect and lead me into Thy victorious procession.

This enraged all the powers of darkness against You and me!

Thus all prophecies have been fulfilled in You

And thus Your heavenly plan for me is realized.

+O You Who are crucified on my behalf, I turn to You to hide and seek refuge.

All the powers of darkness will not move away!

Their violence and darkness will be quickly dispelled

Their treachery and tricks will be revealed ultimately!

I am enlightened by the splendor of Your glory,

+The angels glorify You, and in wonder ask:

What are the powers of darkness doing to the Pantocreator?

Those are Your angels that give me support

For it is because of You that I carry with You Your Cross!

+My fathers were on the lookout for You ever since the angel spoke to Zechariah, the high priest

And when the time came for you to carry the Cross,

They all watched You

Following every moment and every event in that critical week

They watched everything with great accuracy and knowledge!

+O Lord, You have come to the procession of the Cross

And all the old events preceded You and prepared for that procession.

+Adam realized the divine promise: "...the Seed (of the woman) shall bruise (the) head (of the serpent).

And Abraham rejoiced as he realized that the act of offering and killing his son was a symbol of Your Offering!

Jacob too was surprised when he realized that the ladder above his head

Is Your amazing Cross!

+Moses, the prophet cried, saying:

Now I understand the mystery of the power of the Passover lamb!

And the mystery of the power of the waters that saved the people!

As well as the mystery of the rock that was hit by the stick and gushed with water!

Joshua, the son of Nun, rejoiced, saying:

Let all Your people now enter into true rest.

O Lord, You are the true Commander Who grants Your people dominion and an inheritance!

+ David, the king, rejoiced, saying:

Now You have lifted up my fallen tent, O my Son and Lord!

You are the King of Kings! You are the Desire of all nations!

+Every one of the prophets came forth

Everyone repeating what he had foretold or pronounced,

For all things have been fulfilled by the procession of Your Cross!

+Thine is the power, the glory, and the majesty

O You Who have destroyed the procession of the powers of darkness with Your Cross!

And have gathered the earthly and the heavenly ones in the procession of Your love!

Grant me to partake in Your joyous procession!

VII-The New Passover Day

Your Resurrection...the Procession of the Great Day of the Lord

Who Can Stand before the Power of Your Resurrection?!

All the evil powers conspired to hold the Lord Jesus Christ imprisoned within the grave. As a result all sign of the Lord's holy procession dissolved and dispersed.

"...The chief priests and Pharisees gathered together to Pilate, saying:" Sir, we remember while He was still alive, how that deceiver said:" After three days I will rise". Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him away. And say to the people,' He has risen from the dead'. So the last deception will be worse than the first," (Matt.27: 62-67).

These evil powers did not realize that every opposition became an added witness to You and to Your glorious resurrection. By their acts they confirmed to the authorities and the people the truth of all that the Lord had predicted before His death. Now it became clear to everyone that the Lord knew in advance that He would be killed and then resurrected on the third day.

In the first hours of the third day, at dawn on Sunday, You arose O my Lord and Savior with great power. Strong guards were ordered to keep close watch over the site of Your grave. You arose while the seal was still on the tombstone, and the stone had not been rolled away, and while the angels were inside standing by Your Body and worshipping You!

Sunday became a procession intended to prepare for the procession of the resurrection:

Your holy resurrection transformed Sunday into the great day of the Lord. The Sabbath with its literal implications was over. People used to cease from doing any work on the Sabbath; they would not travel unless it was for a mile or two away from home. It was like being imprisoned within one's land and property. Daily life came to a standstill for everyone. Now the spiritual Sabbath had arrived when all believers would never cease to do the Lord's work with a joyful and glad heart. On this day, believers will not reject to travel and take flight with their hearts as if on spiritual wings ever yearning to reach the skies. There the doors would be opened up and the throne of the Almighty expecting their flight towards Him!

Sunday has become God's token for the great day of the Almighty. On that day believers practice a resurrected life. Their souls and hearts join with their thoughts and feelings as they focus on the Firstborn Who arose from the dead. They meditate on the hope of resurrection on that great day when the body will join the soul in eternal glory!

O Lord, Your resurrection has transformed all our days of estrangement into the joyful day of the Lord. You have transformed Your Church into an ever-present procession of resurrection. All follow under the banner of the Creator of the resurrection Himself!

1-The Procession of the Few Faithful Ones:

About seven hundred and thirty years before the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, Isaiah, the prophet, saw a rich man open the family's gravesite to receive the Body of Jesus Christ. that would not be touched by any corruption. That rich man represented the very few faithful, generous, loving, and courageous ones. About that vision, Isaiah

said:” And they made His grave with the wicked-But with the rich at His death”, (Is. 53:9).

This was actually fulfilled according to the words of St Matthew: ’Now when evening had come, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. This man came to Pilate and asked for the Body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be given to him...And Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the tomb,’ (Matt. 27:57-61).

The forces of evil concerted together to destroy any effort made to honor the crucified Lord. The disciples had fled out of fear, yet one unknown man was found and he went to Pilate to take the Holy Body and shroud It. He desired to honor Him by laying Him in the family grave that became transformed into a kind of heavenly place inhabited by the Lord Who was surrounded by His angels. That man represents the procession of the very few faithful ones who do not fear the opposition of the whole world against them. They carry the Body of Christ and honor Him, for He is the One who transforms even their inner graves into a heaven inhabited by heavenly ones!

Among these few, and they are found in every generation, is the apostolic Pope Athanasius who was told:” The whole world is against you,” and he answered :”And I am against the world” He carried the Body of Christ within his heart and ignored the attacks made against him by the whole world!

O Lord, Your resurrection has created this amazing procession that represents the few faithful ones who are attacked constantly by the world! They carry within them Your Body and therefore enjoy the awesome power of Your resurrection that conquers death and destroys fear!

2- The Procession of Heavenly Trophies

While Joseph of Arimathea represents the procession of the few faithful and perseverant ones who can be found in every generation, there is another invisible procession that was set free from Hades when the Soul of the Lord entered there. Who can express the feelings of all the believers who had passed away since Adam and up to the moment of the Lord’s death? Thousands upon thousands of man, women, and children, who had died through the years, now greeted Him with the new song: the song of the Lamb and Redeemer. The mystery of the Lord had been revealed to them, and they realized the meaning of their previous life. They surrounded Him and Hades was transformed into a glorious place for them. The lower dark places could no longer restrain them for the Savior had broken its iron locks. He had come to carry them as trophies. He transformed them from slaves to sons and daughters of God and sanctified in Him. He carried them to be with Him in Paradise, and in the front ranks was the thief who had been crucified at His right hand!

3- A Procession of Constant Activity:

It was believed that the grave could lock in the Resurrection Who is the Giver of life. However, the feature of divinity never departed from the dead Body. Consequently, the resurrection took place with such amazing power. The One Who lay in the grave had said:” I have power to lay it (life)..down, and I have power to take it again,”(Jn 10:18). He obeyed the will of His Father, which is identical to the will of the Son. Through His own power, the Lord Jesus Christ arose from the dead while the door was locked and sealed. However, everything moved at His resurrection: the heavens sent angels, the earth trembled, and the guards fell on their faces.

His resurrection moved the hearts of a new procession that consisted of the Marys and some disciples. They hurried to meet the Holy One and to enjoy the power and cheer

of His resurrection. The Lord appeared to them at the grave, and asked the women to announce the news that He would meet them in Galilee.

Nothing occupied their minds other than His resurrection. Even as two of them walked towards the village of Emmaus, they discussed His resurrection; and so Christ, risen from the dead, joined them. He questioned them, then opened their minds and granted them fellowship with Him so that they might experience the resurrected life.

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+ O Lord, on my account You have been crucified, and for my sake You have risen on the third day

Your resurrection has destroyed all the resistance of the evil one

Your resurrection has granted me a life that is victorious even over death!

+ Your resurrection has transformed the days of my estrangement into a Sabbath for the Lord!

All my days have become days of true rest

These give pleasure to the heavenly Father

While I find joy as I gladly struggle to do Your work constantly

+My life has become converted into a voyage that is a true Sabbath!

There are no set destinations for this voyage

But rather a soaring of the soul as though to reach the heavens themselves!

My soul has found its rest in your embrace

When will my body also leave to find its rest in You and join my soul?!

+You were raised on the Cross in broad daytime

And You have offered redemption to all publicly

Your resurrection was fulfilled on Sunday, at dawn

But none would enjoy it except those who yearn to unite with You

My soul prays to be worthy of enjoying the gladness of Your resurrection!

+My fathers, who waited in Hades, realized the absolute power of Your resurrection

When You descended to them and carried them away in Your hands

You carried them as joyous trophies to enjoy life in Your paradise!

May I have a share with them!

May all the locks of hell be destroyed and make me free

May You carry me in Your hands to deter the snake from drawing near and devouring me

May You carry me into Your inner depths so that death fails to recognize me

Who can imprison my soul while it is safe within Your hands?!

+Your resurrection shook the emotions of the heavenly ones and their hosts hastened on Your account

Your resurrection shook the earth

May my earth be shaken too and transformed into a heaven.

Your resurrection shook the guards

Who can oppose me now that You have raised my soul?!

Your resurrection preoccupied the Marys and the disciples

May my heart be enflamed by these thoughts until I meet with You, O glorious Resurrection!