

In the Name JESUS. [Amen]

Alleluia! Christ is risen! [He is risen indeed! Alleluia!]

What a wonderful Gospel text we hear this glorious morning – of the Resurrection of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! On Friday we heard how greatly He suffered – to take away the sins of the world ... to take away your sins and mine. He was flogged and nailed to the Cross and lifted up between earth and heaven – having come from both since He is true God and true Man ... yet rejected by the sons and daughters of earth and forsaken by His heavenly Father since He had made Himself the worst sinner by taking all of **our** sins and iniquities into Himself to be nailed in Him to the Cross. We heard how He petitioned the Father to forgive the world of sinners ... how He breathed His last, commending His spirit into the Father's merciful hands when He had finished all the work of our salvation ... and how Joseph of Arimathea had taken down His battered, bloody, lifeless Body to lay it in the tomb.

But this morning we hear the Good News of His resurrection from the dead. The stone is rolled away – the Savior is not there! Alleluia! Christ is risen! [He is risen indeed! Alleluia!]

When Mary Magdalene finds Him – or, rather, is found by Him – she wants to hold on to Him. But Jesus has a task for Mary – she must go to the disciples with this message from the risen Lord: ***Go to My brethren and say to them, “I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.”*** [JN 20.17]

This, then, is why the Savior has taught us to pray: *Our Father Who art in heaven* – because He has made Himself our Brother. This means that we also have God as our Father – as our heavenly, loving, forgiving, merciful Father ... Who continually waits for us to return to Him in repentance and faith ... even goes running out to meet us ... indeed, goes out to seek and find and save us from the perils of our sin and from the foolishness of our stubborn waywardness to bring us back into His House and Kingdom.

It is enough reason to celebrate this day that the Son of God – Who took into Himself our human flesh and suffered and died to win our salvation – has risen victorious over sin, death, devil, and grave. But there is a double reason to celebrate since He calls us His brothers! We cannot possibly – this side of heaven – fully calculate everything that is comprehended in this word *'brethren.'*

Peter had denied the Lord three times. The other disciples had fled from Him and shamefully forsaken Him in His distress and suffering. So Peter and all the disciples are caught in a bad conscience, terror, and trepidation – just as we are, on account of our own denials of the Lord by our repeated sinning. They – and we – all deserve to have a very different message from our God. *Go to those faithless miscreants – some of whom have denied Me ... some of whom have fallen away and been faithless toward Me ... some of whom have not believed My Word that I would suffer and die and after three days rise – and tell them that because they denied Me, I deny them before My Father ... because they fell away from Me, the Father will turn away from them ...*

because they haven't believed My death and resurrection for their forgiveness, life, and salvation, they will die and everlasting death.

But such is not the message of our risen Savior. Quite the opposite! In mercy and in great lovingkindness and forgiveness He says: ***Go to My brethren!*** Who are we to receive such an honor and be and be called brothers – and sisters – of the Son of God? It is enough that He is our Lord and God and Creator – and we His creatures. But now He makes us also His brethren?! This is surely cause to rejoice greatly – not only today but every day!

For the consequences of this word ***'brethren'*** are great and glorious beyond measure! For if we are Christ's brothers and sisters – just as Christ promises us in these words – then it follows that we are heirs together with Christ of all His possessions and of equal inheritance, possessing in common with Him, our Brother, all the blessings that He has. And He is Lord over heaven and earth, over sin and death, over the devil and hell, and over everything that can be named not only in this world but also in the world to come – as St. Paul says in EPHESIANS [1.21].

This word ***'brethren'*** places a crown on your head ... makes you a citizen of that heavenly Paradise where Christ is forever Lord and King ... and makes His Father **your** Father ... His Kingdom your heavenly Mansion ... and His Resurrection the most certain assurance of your own resurrection to life everlasting!

Alleluia! Christ is risen! [He is risen indeed! Alleluia!]

In the Name of the FATHER and of the ✠ SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT. [Amen]