

✠ Θεοφιλες Πατριση Αλεξανδρου και Αφρικης  
Theophilus Patriarch of Alexandria and Africa

Ref. No: 43/2020

THEODOROS II

BY THE GRACE OF GOD POPE AND PATRIARCH OF ALEXANDRIA  
AND ALL AFRICA TO THE PLENITUDE OF OUR APOSTOLIC AND  
PATRIARCHAL THRONE

GRACE AND MERCY AND PEACE FROM OUR RISEN LORD  
AND GOD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST

*"With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you  
before I suffer; for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it  
until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God" (Luke 12:15-16)*

Dear brothers and beloved and illumined children in the Lord,

It is not just a few fellow human beings who are experiencing the tragic reality of our world due to the pandemic as the "**silence**", the "**quietness**" and, worst of all, the "**absence**" of God.

However, for us Orthodox Christians, God is not a general, invisible and abstract concept. He is not a satisfaction of the innate tendency for religion. The God of our Fathers, the Triune God, is a relationship, a communion, a personal God. Our Truth, just like tonight, holding us by the hand tightly, took us from Death to Life. He resurrected us! Pascha, that is, the passage from the grave to triumph, is for us Christians the only, unique and non-negotiable experience. And it is not only an experience for these times, it is an experience of our whole life, it is the eternal preaching of the Church. That is why Pascha stands steadfast in external conditions, even when these were called martyrdom and catacombs, exile, prisons, persecutions and global crises, like the current one.

No power is capable of overthrowing the Paschal character of the Church, as inaccessible as we can imagine the future to be. And yes! When external conditions become difficult, we do not have the "**silence**", the "**quietness**" and, worst of all, the "**absence**" of God, rather we come to the advantageous position of resorting to face to face communion and relationship with Him as we respond with a new attitude to His fierce, intense desire to share with us this Pascha too, as He has done without interruption all these centuries.

In difficult circumstances, God speaks to us more eloquently, surrounds us with the gift of return to Him, allows us to seek Him with ever more and sincere innate desire. Therefore, our own response to the thunderous voice of God is also our responsibility to find ourselves, or not, freely, effortlessly, under His protection. God's protection is not secular prosperity. God's protection is a Cross, as well as a Resurrection. God's protection is not a promise of material affluence. It is an arduous journey to Golgotha, accompanied by the prayers of our All Holy Virgin and the Saints, and our destination is the Kingdom of Heaven.

My children,

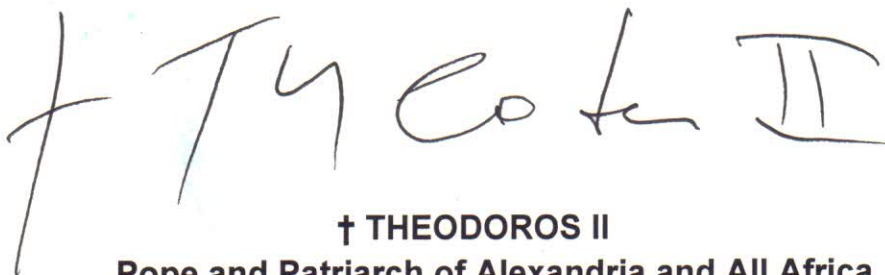
This Pascha we may experience in a more impressive way the Lord's desire to be share us as life's preoccupations seem to recede in the face of the unfinished biological presence of one and only virus and we have more time as well as more suitable conditions to commune Him inside of us. Besides, **"the Kingdom of God is within us"** (Lue 17:21). The bells will ring; the most important thing is our own awakening, the return to the Father, repentance, Paschal hope, the anticipation of meeting each other face to face, the expectation of our all being together both in our Churches and outside, our longing to commune of His Body and Blood.

Your Patriarch, from the Apostolic See of the Evangelist Mark, is praying for all of you, carries his Cross, hurting and struggling with you, my children, but I keep the hope in Christ that with the Resurrection of our Lord, will come the light in the darkness of this pandemic.

With these thoughts I embrace you, I bless you, I forgive you and invoke in your lives the great mercy and blessing of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit!

Christ is Risen, my children!

**"Take heart! I have overcome the world"** (John 16:33)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Theodoros II' with a cross symbol at the beginning.

† THEODOROS II  
Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa

In the Great City of Alexandria  
Holy Pascha 2020