



Paschal Epistle, 2023

Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen (Luke 24, 5-6).

It was with these divine words that the angels addressed the myrrh-bearing women who sought the body of Christ Crucified. They address these words, however, not just to the women, but also to us and all who read or hear Christ's Gospel, from then until the very end of time. They not only announce that Christ is risen, but indicate where to find Him – not *among the dead*. If the myrrh-bearers were instructed not to seek the body of the Risen Christ among the dead, nor then should we seek Him and His mystical body among the spiritually and mystically dead.

When we see Him, we will hear those first words that He spoke to His disciples after His Resurrection – *peace be unto you*. This is the same peace which He imparted to His disciples on the eve of His Crucifixion, saying *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you (John 14, 27)*. It is this peace which neither this world nor its rulers can ever give. It was this peace that was necessary to dispel the fear and confusion that had taken over the disciples who had just witnessed the Crucifixion and death of their beloved Lord. It is this peace that was and is indispensable, not just to see Him, but to recognise Him as the truly Risen Lord, in the flesh, and not some apparition or phantom. It is this peace that is now indispensable to overcome both our social and personal conflicts, if we are to commune with the Risen Christ, even within the realities of this fallen world.

Brothers and sisters, dear people of God, I wish you all the peace of the Risen Christ, the peace *which passeth all understanding (Phil. 4, 7)*, that, present tribulations notwithstanding, we all may truly partake in Christ's glorious Resurrection, both here, and *in the unwaning day of [His] Kingdom*. For, as the Apostle says, *neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8, 38-39)*.

Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!



John, Bishop of Caracas and South America,
The Passover of the LORD 2023.