



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF BOSTON
ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΒΟΣΤΩΝΗΣ

**Paschal Reflection of
Metropolitan Methodios
2016**

Thousands of faithful are attending services tonight throughout the six New England states. They gather at the life-giving tomb of our Savior to light their Easter candles.

They gather to experience the dawn of a new day, one that has no sunset.

They gather to hear and, in turn, to share the most joyous news ever heard by humanity.

They gather in our churches to hear the angel inform the frightened myrrh-bearing women, “He is not here. He is risen (Matthew 28:6).”

They gather to proclaim to all creation the victory of life over death, of love over evil, of light over darkness.

This year, our paschal celebration is observed several weeks following that of our brothers and sisters of the Roman Catholic Church and Protestant communions. Orthodox Christians celebrate Easter in accordance with the decision taken at the First Ecumenical Synod in Nicaea in 325 AD. That decision mandated that Easter is to be

celebrated on the first Sunday after the first full moon following the vernal equinox and always after the Jewish Passover. Astrological calculations and mandates of tradition are certainly important. We respectfully abide by them. But really, it doesn't matter so much WHEN we celebrate the "feast of all feasts and the festival of festivals", but HOW we celebrate it! How we are TRANSFIGURED by it! In fact, we believe that every time we commune the precious body and blood of our Lord and Savior, (as Saint Basil declares, echoing the words of St. Paul) we "proclaim His death and confess His Resurrection" (1 Cor. 11:26).

As we gather this night in our churches, Christian brethren in the middle east and northern Africa are being persecuted, tortured, and killed for their faith. A genocide is taking place before our very eyes. In those lands where Christianity first appeared and then flourished for many centuries, Islamic terrorists are determined to wipe the earth of any evidence our faith ever existed.

As we celebrate the resurrection of our Savior, we cannot ignore the colossal humanitarian crisis created by the spread of violence and armed conflict, nor the persecution and displacement of religious and ethnic minorities whose human dignity and freedom have been violated.

Let us pray for all those brethren – regardless of faith – who have been unjustly torn from their families and friends. Those who have been forced to leave their homelands to migrate to unknown lands, hoping for a better future where they could live in dignity, free to worship without fear of reprisals. Let us pray for those who died in the cold waters of the

Aegean on their way to homelands where they could “live peaceful and serene lives in all piety and holiness” to quote from the Liturgy of St. Basil.

My beloved in the Lord, fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God (Eph. 2:19),

All types of darkness hang heavily in our world, shrouding our lives with guilt, with fear and loneliness, with addiction, with pain and resentment. Darkness permeates dysfunctional families, broken friendships and marriages. Darkness encircles the world in an endless cycle of violence. Darkness is injustice. It is racism. It is hunger. It is homelessness. It is crime. This is the darkness that is overcome by the radiant light which emanates from the empty life-giving tomb. It is THIS light that you will receive momentarily. It is the light of Christ, the Savior of the world. It is light of the Risen Lord Himself who brings about a “newness of life”. He is “the light which shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it” (John 1:5). It is this blazing light that we are called to share with those disenchanting and disenfranchised. Those overcome by sin, by apathy, by spiritual hopelessness. It is this unwaning light that we are called to share with those who continue to be mired in the “region and shadow of death” (Matthew 4:16). St. Paul urges all “to cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light” (Romans 13:12). Tonight, the Risen Lord comes to resurrect us to new life. To lead us in our celebration of hope, of truth, of reconciliation. Tonight, the Lord rises from the dead to resurrect hope in our hearts and in the hearts of all those who suffer throughout the world.

Come then, “receive the light from the unwaning light and glorify Christ who rose from the dead” (Paschal Hymn). Let us advance fearlessly into the world, armed with the radiant light which emanates from the life-giving tomb. May its glow penetrate the darkness. May it ignite every human life.