

April 18

SERMON - NEW SUNDAY - Palos Heights - 1993

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, THE SON AND THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

RI will be a father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.S
2 Corinthians 6: 18

These words, condensed by Saint Paul from Old Testament readings, comprise the promise of the Lord given to His people. The promise was fulfilled through

Q1Q

the Incarnation and the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ who opened before us the way to salvation and each one of us was given the opportunity to be accepted by God as His child and to accept God as his or her father.

The rise of humanity to the level of Divinity could not be achieved by man, since our human nature is limited. God in His omnipotence could have pulled man out of his sinful existence and raised him to heaven, but such an action would have meant the suppression of man's free will. Man had to be given the choice of making his or her decision by his own will. Prior to the Incarnation man was condemned to death because of original sin. Through the Incarnation God reestablished his bond with mankind.

O2O

The channel of communication between God and man was reopened. Through the Resurrection the human nature in Christ, united as one with the Divine nature, rose to heaven, making it possible for mankind to be one with the Son of God.

This Sunday we continue celebrating the Resurrection of our Lord. It must be very clear to every Armenian that the channel of communication between God and man is Christ himself with his united divine and human natures. Had God not taken our nature, His Resurrection would not have been an unusual event and would not set the path for our salvation.

Christ is not merely a historical figure or a great

Q3Q

teacher of the past, as some denominations want us to believe. He is and will always be in His glory in heaven for ever, seated on the right hand of the Father. But Christ is also in our midst, since we as a group are the corporate body of Christ. We are the living church and sanctuaries serve us as houses where the body unites with the Godhead. This is why we consecrate our churches and also the altars and the pictures used in churches. The place or item anointed with holy *myron* or chrism becomes a holy site where the Spirit of God lives and God's presence is felt. The altars and the pictures we anointed today are now holy and we may pray before them. This does not mean that we worship the wooden or stone structure of the

O4O

altars and the canvass and the frame of the pictures. We are not idol worshippers. What we seek and worship the divinity behind the picture or the structure.

This quest for God must not be abandoned by us. Through very difficult periods, God has kept us from total extinction and given us spiritual strength to face the unsurmountable problems that stand before us. What may seem impossible in human terms is not impossible in God's eyes. We need Him always and particularly today, as we instinctively turn to Him. This instinct is inherent in our culture, for which we are grateful to our ancestors, but we must go beyond that stage and seek spiritual knowledge. Living in a free country such as this, we have

Q5Q

every opportunity to educate ourselves and our children in the knowledge of God. We must also help our compatriots in Armenia so that they also acquire the same knowledge. Without God we could not survive the odds against us. The political pressures, social concerns and economic stresses are so serious in Armenia that the spirit of our people could easily succumb to these. Don't think that our communities thousands of miles away would remain intact from problems affecting the homeland. We in the diaspora need as much spiritual support from heaven as our brothers and sisters in Armenia. The lack of such support would weaken us and several decades of hard work to build parishes, churches, cultural halls and

Q6Q

schools and other institutions will be futile.

During this Easter season, our people displayed an unprecedented spiritual rebirth both in our homeland and throughout the diaspora. According to reports, the church attendance during the holy week and the numbers of those receiving Holy Communion were much higher than previously recorded. The piety of people we witnessed during the Holy Week leaves no doubt in my mind that Armenian Christianity is a part of the living Church of Christ. We must try to keep this same spirit alive in our parishes throughout the year and work hard so that every Sunday is like the Holy Week.

The important lesson of the fifty-day Easter cycle,

Q7Q

as we celebrate the glorious Resurrection of the Lord, is to reach out for God and persevere in our faith to obtain real salvation. If in our days of difficulty and prosperity we Armenians seek God and make an effort to become His sons and daughters, He will stand by our side and guide us and we shall say: But thou, O Lord, art a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head [Psalms, 3:3]. Amen.

Q8Q