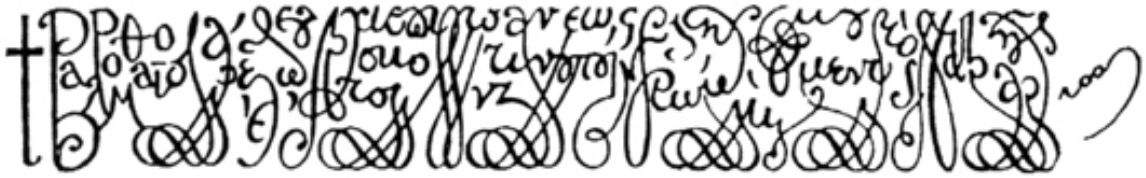


Prot. No. 316

Beloved brothers and sisters, dear children in the Lord,

Christ is Risen!

Once again, the sacred day of Pascha has dawned in full delight and splendor, dispersing joy, comfort, gladness and assurance of life to all faithful, despite the heavy atmosphere that prevails in our world on account of the multidimensional crisis with all its familiar painful consequences for our daily life.

Christ has risen from the tomb as divinely human; and humanity has risen with Him! The tyranny of death belongs to the past. The hopelessness of hades' captivity has irrevocably gone. The only powerful Giver of life, having through His Incarnation voluntarily assumed all of the misfortune of our nature and all that it entails, namely death, has already "brought death to hades by the lightning of divinity,"[1] granting us life – and "life in abundance." (John 10.10)

This abundance of life, which was granted to us by the Risen Lord, is ceaselessly slandered and assaulted by the devil – indeed, these actions are the source of his very name – although he is now weakened, completely powerless, and entirely ridiculous. The devil slanders Life by means of the *hubris* that still prevails in the world against God, humanity and the creation. The devil assaults Life by means of the sinful tendency that exists within us like "old rust," using this to entrap us either into tangible sin or delusional belief. *Hubris* is the offspring of that "rust", while both comprise the sinister couple responsible for disrupting relationships within ourselves, with others, as well as with God and the whole creation. Accordingly, it is imperative that we purify ourselves of this rust with great attentiveness and carefulness in order that the profuse life-giving light of the Risen Christ may shine in our mind, soul and body, so that it may in turn dispel the darkness of *hubris* and pour the "abundance" of life to all the world.

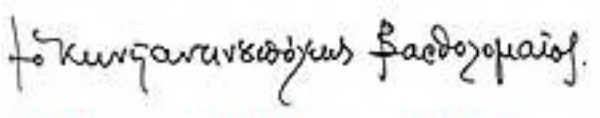
This cannot be achieved by philosophy, science, technology, art, or any ideology; it can only be achieved through faith in what God has condescended for us human beings through His Passion, Crucifixion and Burial, descending to the depths of hades and rising from the dead as the divine-human Jesus Christ. It is also expressed in the sacramental life of the Church as well as through laborious and systematic spiritual struggle. The Church, as the Body of Christ, unceasingly and to the ages experiences the miracle of the Resurrection; through its sacred Mysteries, its Theology and its practical teachings, it offers us the possibility of participating in that miracle, of sharing in the

victory over death, of becoming children shaped by the light of the Resurrection and truly "partakers of divine nature." (2 Peter 1.4), just as in the life of every Saint in the past and present. The thorny weeds of passions growing within the depths of our heart, polluted by the rust of "the old self" (Eph. 4.22) must definitely be transformed as soon as possible in Christ, through Christ and for the sake of Christ and His living images that surround us – namely, our fellow human beings – into a bouquet of virtues, holiness, and righteousness. Hence, the sacred hymnographer chants in timely manner: "Let us put on the robe of righteousness, which is whiter than snow, and let us rejoice today in the day of the Pascha; for Christ, the sun of righteousness that rises from the dead, has showered upon us the light of incorruption." [2] The white garment of righteousness was given to us symbolically on the day of our Baptism; and we are invited to cleanse it continually through constant repentance, control of desires, patience in life's pain, and relentless effort to fulfill the commandments of God, and especially the supreme commandment of love. In this way, we are able to participate in the cross-bearing self-emptying of Christ, in order that the Paschal gladness, radiant light, and joyful salvation may enter our life and world.

We address this from the Phanar, where we experience the suffering of Holy Friday and the light of the Resurrection, as we express to you the affection of the Mother Church, wholeheartedly wishing for all the saving gift and Paschal blessing of the Lord of Life, who rose from the dead.

Holy Pascha 2010

Fervent supplicant for all before the Lord



+ Bartholomew of Constantinople

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[1] Dismissal Hymn of the Resurrection, First Tone.

[2] From Vespers on the Sunday of Thomas.