

## Where, Death, is your sting? (Vassilios Papavassiliou)

[Ξένες γλώσσες / In English](#)



[Previous Publication: <http://pemptousia.com/2016/04/the-epitaphios-the-tomb-of-christ/>]

I mentioned the overwhelming feeling of liberation that we experience on Easter night, and I want to draw your attention to two texts which are good examples of this. The first is the Sermon of St John Chrysostom, which is read towards the end of the midnight vigil:

Have any wearied themselves with fasting, let them now enjoy their payment. Has anyone laboured since the first hour, let them today receive their due. Did any come after the third hour, let them feast with gratitude. Did any arrive after the sixth hour, let them not hesitate: for there is no penalty. Did any delay until after the ninth hour, let them approach without hesitating. Did any arrive only for the eleventh hour, let them not fear because of their lateness: for the Lord is generous and receives the last as the first: he gives rest to the worker of the eleventh hour as to those of the first. He has pity on the latter, he cares for the former. He gives to the one, he is generous to the other. He accepts the work done, he welcomes the intention. He honours the achievement, he praises the purpose. Therefore all of you enter into the joy of our Lord: first and last, enjoy your reward. Rich and poor dance together. Sober and slothful honour the day. Fasters and non-fasters be glad today. The table is full, all of you enjoy yourselves. The calf is fatted, let none go away hungry. All of you enjoy the banquet of the faith. All of you enjoy the richness of his goodness. Let no one grieve at their poverty: for the kingdom of all has been revealed. Let no one bewail their faults: for forgiveness has risen from the tomb. Let no one fear death: for the Saviour's death has freed us.



I said at the very beginning that Holy Week brings the pious and the not so pious together. The invitation for all to come together to celebrate is most emphatic in this sermon on Easter night. Whether we have fasted and attended the services throughout Great Lent, or just from the beginning of Holy Week, or have only turned up for this midnight service, we are all invited to celebrate the feast with joy, without fear, hesitation or guilt. No one is excluded. All our sorrows, all our failings, all our grudges, all our problems, all our sins disintegrate in the face of the Resurrection. By His Passion and Resurrection, Christ has freed us all. There can be no other response to this than joy and forgiveness, which brings me to the second text – a hymn which we sing on Easter night and at every service for the next forty days:

The day of Resurrection; let us be radiant for the festival, and let us embrace one another. Let us say, brethren, even to those that hate us, ‘Let us forgive all things on the Resurrection’.

There is no greater liberation than forgiveness. When we truly understand the meaning of the Passion and Resurrection, when we really feel and live the joy of that freedom, forgiveness is the only possible response. So, if any of you are asking yourselves, “what difference does all this make to the way I live my life?”, let me help you answer that question: it makes every bit of difference! What cause now can we have to be angry with our neighbour? What cause to despair for our sins or fret about our problems? Who now has the right to look down on others? Who now

has cause to complain that he is mistreated? Who now has cause to be bitter or bear a grudge? The universe has been filled with joy, freedom and forgiveness. "Where, Death, is your sting? Where Hell, is your victory? Christ is risen, and you are abolished! Christ is risen, and the demons have fallen! Christ is risen, and Angels rejoice! Christ is risen, and life has found freedom! Christ is risen, and there is no corpse in the grave! For Christ, being raised from the dead, has become the first fruits of those who sleep. To him be glory and might to the ages of ages. Amen".



*source vasilinos.wordpress.com*

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Source: The Youth Conference & Workshop held at the Greek Orthodox Parish Community Hall of the Holy Cross & the Archangel Michael, Golders Green, London, 14<sup>th</sup> April 2006