



የኢትዮጵያ ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋሕዶ ቤተ ክርስቲያን ሃይማኖትና ሥርዓት

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Faith and Order

The Fourth Sunday of Zemene Fasika (*Paschal Season*)

Liturgical Readings:

Rom. 4:14- end; Rev. 20:1 – end; Acts 10:39-44

Psalm 78:29;

John 21:1-15

The Anaphora of Saint Dioscorus

**Christ is risen from the dead,
(trampling down death by death)
with high power and authority;
binding Satan in chains and (upon those in the tombs bestowing life)
setting Adam free,
and from now on it will be joy and peace.**

The Holy Pascha (Fasika)

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, One God. Amen.

Beloved children of the Holy Trinity, redeemed by the precious Blood of Christ and gathered in the joy of the Resurrection, today we stand before the radiant mystery of **Fasika**, the Holy Pascha of our Lord. This is the feast of feasts and the solemnity of solemnities, the day upon which death has been trampled down by death and life has dawned upon the world.

Yet to understand the splendour of this holy day, we must journey back into the ancient pages of Holy Scripture, where the divine wisdom prepared its shadow long before the fullness of time.

In the Book of Exodus, the Lord commanded Israel to remember the night of deliverance: *“This day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations”* (Exodus 12:14). The people were instructed to take a spotless lamb, to slay it, and to mark their doorposts with its blood. When the angel of judgment passed through Egypt, he saw the blood and **passed over** the houses of the faithful.

Thus was born **Pesach**, the Passover—the great crossing from bondage to freedom.

They ate the lamb with **unleavened bread**, the bread of haste, leaving behind the leaven of Egypt. As Moses commanded again in Deuteronomy: *“Observe the month of Abib, and keep the Passover unto the Lord thy God”* (Deuteronomy 16:1). The people were to remember that their salvation came not by their own strength but by the mighty hand of God.

Yet, beloved, the Old Covenant was a shadow pointing toward a greater mystery.

The lamb slain in Egypt was but a sign of the Lamb who was to come. The unleavened bread foreshadowed a purer offering. The Red Sea itself foretold a greater crossing—from sin to righteousness, from death to life.

The holy Apostle Paul proclaims this mystery clearly: *“Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us”* (1 Corinthians 5:7). And the Apostle Peter declares that we were redeemed *“not with corruptible things, as silver and gold... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot”* (1 Peter 1:18–19).

Thus the Passover of Moses finds its fulfilment in the Pascha of Christ.

Beloved, when the hour came, our Lord Jesus Christ gathered His disciples in the Upper Room. The Gospel according to Luke tells us His words filled with longing: *“With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer”* (Luke 22:15).

This was no ordinary meal. The ancient rite was about to be transformed into the eternal covenant. The Lamb who had been symbolised for centuries was now present in their midst.

And yet the world did not recognise Him.

Before the Roman governor Pontius Pilate, truth itself stood silent. Pilate asked the question that still echoes through the ages: *“What is truth?”* (John 18:38). Though he found no fault in Him, the crowd cried out instead for Barabbas, choosing a rebel over the Prince of Peace.

Thus the Innocent One was condemned. The Lamb of God was led to the Cross.

But this, beloved, was no defeat. It was the fulfilment of the divine promise.

The Apostle Paul teaches in Romans that the promise does not come through the Law alone but through faith—the faith of Abraham, who believed God and was counted righteous (Romans 4:13–25). In the same way, we believe in Him *“that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.”*

At Golgotha the Lamb was slain. The Blood was shed—not on wooden doorposts, but upon the wood of the Cross. And that Blood now marks the hearts of all who believe.

But the grave could not imprison the Author of Life.

The Apostle Peter proclaims boldly in the Acts of the Apostles: *“They slew Him and hanged Him on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and shewed Him openly”* (Acts 10:39–40). And as Peter spoke, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word, revealing that the salvation of Pascha was not for Israel alone, but for all nations.

Indeed, the Resurrection is the cosmic victory foretold in the vision of Saint John. In the Revelation we behold the ancient serpent bound and cast down (Revelation 20). The tyranny of death is broken, and the reign of Christ is established forever.

Our Lord descended even into the depths of Sheol, shattering the gates of brass and leading forth Adam and the righteous who had awaited the promise. The captives were freed, the darkness pierced by divine light.

Therefore Pascha is not merely a remembrance—it is **deliverance**.

Beloved, the Gospel of John recounts that after the Resurrection, the disciples returned to the Sea of Tiberias. All night they laboured and caught nothing. Yet at dawn a familiar voice called from the shore: *“Cast the net on the right side of the ship.”*

When they obeyed, the net overflowed with fish.

And upon the shore stood the Risen Christ.

There, He prepared bread and fish for them, and He restored Peter with words of mercy: *“Feed my lambs... feed my sheep”* (John 21:15–17). The shepherd who had once denied his Lord was now entrusted with the care of the flock.

Thus, the Church was strengthened, and the apostolic ministry confirmed.

Beloved, this is the mystery we celebrate today.

In the Old Covenant, the Israelites ate and were satisfied, as the Psalmist says: *“So they did eat, and were well filled”* (Psalm 78:29). Yet the food of the wilderness was only a shadow.

Today we partake of the true heavenly nourishment—the Body and Blood of Christ, our eternal Pascha.

In the sacred tradition of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, handed down through the holy fathers and adorned by the hymns of Saint Yared, the Church bursts forth with triumphant praise:

**“This day of Pascha is holy!
Let us rejoice in it!
Heaven and earth are filled with gladness,
for Pascha is the memorial of the Resurrection of our Saviour.”**

And again we proclaim:

**“The King of the world, the Resurrection of the dead,
Christ has risen on the third day!
On the Christian Sabbath He rose from the tomb.”**

And with joyful hearts we sing:

**“Let us celebrate the Holy Pascha with gladness,
for the venom of death is destroyed,
the yoke of sin is broken,
and the Lord of the Sabbath has shattered the iron gates of Sheol!”**

Beloved, today we too cross over.

We cross from despair into hope.

From darkness into light.

From death into life.

Just as Israel passed through the Red Sea, so we pass through the waters of baptism. Just as the blood of the lamb marked the houses of the faithful, so the Blood of Christ marks the hearts of His people.

Therefore let us cast away the leaven of sin and walk in the new life of the Resurrection. Let us keep the feast not with the old leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

For Christ our Pascha has been sacrificed.

Christ our Pascha has risen.

Christ our Pascha reigns forever.

Therefore with the angels, the apostles, the martyrs, and the saints, and with the joyful melodies of Saint Yared, we proclaim with one voice:

**Christ is risen from the dead!
By His death He has destroyed death,
and upon those in the tombs He has bestowed life.**

Glory be to God the Father,
and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit,
now and unto the ages of ages.

Amen.