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The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Faith and Order

## **The Sixth Sunday of Zemene Fasika (*Paschal Season*)**

### **Liturgical Readings:**

**1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 15:1 - 20; 1<sup>st</sup> Pet.:1 - 13; Acts 2:22-27,**

**Psalm 118:24;**

**John 20:1- 19**

**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.

### **Who is the Holy Spirit?**

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

"This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it" (**Psalm 118:24**). On this glorious feast of the Resurrection, as we stand in the light of the empty tomb, we must contemplate the One who quickens our mortal bodies: the Holy Spirit. For who is the Holy Spirit but the Creator of the worlds and the Fashioner of the heavens? Even when the world was yet unformed and the earth was tossed as a chaotic sea, the Holy Scripture declares that "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" (**Genesis 1:2**). As a bird in the wilderness broods with tender heat over an unhatched egg until life breaks forth, so the Holy Spirit, by hovering over the primordial deep, caused the unstable world to become firm and established. We hear the Psalmist echo this mystery, saying, "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth" (**Psalm 32:6**). This "Breath" is no mere wind, but the Hypostatic Breath, the natural life of the Father and the Son, who clothes all humanity in existence. This is why the righteous Job testified, "The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life" (**Job 33:4**). Indeed, the Holy Spirit is that very "Breath of Life" which the Lord God breathed into the nostrils of Adam, whereby man became a living soul (**Genesis 2:7**). Therefore, we confess the Holy Spirit as the Lord of Life, the Creator who, in one Divine Being (*Akal*) with the Father and the Son, brought all things from non-existence into being.

Because the Holy Spirit is equal in essence (*Eruye Melekot*) with the Father and the Son, He is God; "God" is His very name. When the Prophet Isaiah beheld the King, the Lord of Hosts, in the temple and heard the Seraphim cry "Holy, Holy, Holy," he was beholding the glory of the Spirit (**Isaiah 6:1-10**), a truth confirmed by St. Paul, who clearly interpreted that it was the Holy Spirit who spoke through the prophet (**Acts 28:23-28**). St. Peter likewise explicitly identified the Spirit as God when he rebuked Ananias, showing that to lie to the Holy Ghost is to lie not unto men, but unto God (**Acts 5:3-4**). Yet, though He is one in Divinity and equal in essence, He is a

Distinct Person (*Abiy Akal*). As the Father has His own Person and the Son has His, so the Holy Spirit possesses His own Person; "Holy Spirit" is His Hypostatic Name (*Sme Akal*), not merely a description. This prophetic harmony is found in the "Book of Life" where it is written, "And now the Lord God, and his Spirit, hath sent me" (**Isaiah 48:16**). Here, the Father and the Spirit send the Son, who was manifested in the flesh for our salvation. As we chant in the *Widdase Maryam*: "By His own will, and the will of His Father, and the Holy Spirit, He came and saved us."

Beloved, we must hold fast to the distinction of these Names within the undivided Nature (*Bahriy*) of the Trinity. The Father is the Heart and Intellect, the Son is the Word, and the Holy Spirit is the Breath. As St. Athanasius of Antioch taught, the Father does not change into the Son or the Spirit, nor the Spirit into the Father or the Son; they remain unconfused and immutable. The Holy Spirit is the "Proceder" (*Seratsi*), for He proceeds from the Father alone before the world began. Our Lord Jesus Christ promised: "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me" (**John 15:26**). This is the faith of the 150 Fathers of Constantinople: we worship the Spirit as the Lord and Giver of Life, who spake by the prophets, was preached by the Apostles, and descended at the Jordan.

This Holy Spirit is our *Paraclete*—the Gatherer of the sheep who lost their Shepherd on Great Friday, and the Consoler of the children of Adam afflicted by death. It is the Spirit who makes the Resurrection a living reality for us today. For though we were dead in sin, we have been begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ (**1 Peter 1:1-13**). St. Peter preached that God raised up Jesus, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be holden of it (**Acts 2:22-27**). On that first day of the week, when Mary Magdalene came to the tomb (**John 20:1-19**), the victory over death was revealed—a victory we must declare with power, for as St. Paul writes, if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain (**1 Corinthians 15:1-20**).

The Lord told His disciples it was expedient that He go away, so that the Comforter might come to reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment (**John 16:5-15**). Having triumphed over the grave, He now commands us to go and baptize all nations in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (**Matthew 28:19**). Therefore, let us receive the Spirit of Truth, who guides us into all truth and glorifies the Risen Christ, that we may live as children of the Resurrection. Amen.