

Paschal Epistle of the Episcopate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada, in the year of our Lord 2026

To the venerable clergy, to the diaconate in Christ, and to all the faithful of the UOCC

CHRIST IS RISEN!

“May God arise, may His enemies be scattered” (Psalm 68:1). The Bright Resurrection of Christ rises over us once more, like dawn after a long night. The Lord’s Pascha is not only a remembrance of the event that took place in Jerusalem, but is a living triumph of God’s power, which overcomes what is insurmountable to man. In the tomb, sealed with a stone and guarded by soldiers, human injustice seemed to have prevailed. But right there, in the depths of the silence of Holy Saturday, the mystery of salvation was being accomplished. God acts precisely. Man sees only the end.

The holy apostle and evangelist John the Theologian testifies: “And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend” (John 1:5). These words deeply resonate, especially today when humanity is experiencing shock and upheaval, and our Ukrainian people have already completed the fourth year of the severe trials in a full-scale war. Four years of pain and loss. Four years of destruction of cities and human destinies. And likewise, four years of courage and sacrifices are to be noted. War is evil. Violence is sin. Encroachment on the lives of the innocent and the freedom of the people is a grave moral crime. The prophet David teaches: 'Righteousness and peace kiss each other' (Ps. 84:11). Peace without truth is fragile. Therefore, we pray for a just peace, which will be established based on truth, and not fear. Pascha reminds us: evil is not final.

Saint John Chrysostom proclaims in his declaratory word at Pascha: 'O death, where is your sting? O Hell, where is your victory? Christ is risen—and you are defeated.' The Church has repeated these words for centuries. And today they declare a spiritual sentence against all darkness. No force of violence is eternal. Only God is the Lord of history. Our Lord Jesus Christ teaches in the Gospel of Luke: 'By your endurance save your souls' (Lk. 21:19). Four years of trial are a test of our perseverance. The greatest danger is not only the external enemy, but also internal exhaustion, despair and indifference. For us, Ukrainians in Canada, Pascha is a call not to lose spiritual vigilance. Living in conditions of peace and security, we are called to remain united with those who suffer, to uphold the truth, to raise our children in faith and love of God and our people.

The holy Apostle and Evangelist Luke tells about the disciples who were walking to Emmaus on the day of the Resurrection (Luke 24:13–35). They were leaving Jerusalem with sorrow, convinced that their hope was shattered. Christ walked beside them, but they did not recognize Him. Only when He broke bread did their eyes open. Likewise today, the Lord walks alongside our people, even when we do not realize His presence. And it is precisely in communal prayer and the Eucharist that the Church recognizes the Risen One. The holy Apostle Paul writes: 'If God is for us, who can be against us?' (Romans 8:31). Our Paschal joy should be manifested in concrete deeds: in helping those in need, in supporting those who defend life and in speaking the truth where it is being distorted. The Resurrection of Christ is a testimony that history does not end with the Crucifixion.

Through the Cross, life is revealed. Through darkness, light arises. Through sacrifice, hope is born. In these Holy Days, we greet our warriors, medics, volunteers and all who stand guard over life

and freedom. We greet the Ukrainian community in Canada and around the world, who preserve the faith and spiritual unity.

May the Risen Lord strengthen the weary, comfort the grieving, heal the wounded, and grant wisdom to those who make decisions. May God's grace lead our land along the path of truth, dignity, and freedom.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

CHRIST IS TRULY RISEN!

With heartfelt prayers for all of you,

+Ilarion – Archbishop of Winnipeg and the Central Eparchy, Metropolitan of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada

+Andriy - Bishop of Toronto and the Eastern Eparchy