

THE PASCHAL ENCYCLICAL OF THE PERMANENT CONFERENCE OF UKRAINIAN ORTHODOX BISHOPS BEYOND THE BORDERS OF UKRAINE

Christ is Risen!



Indeed He is Risen!



To the Beloved-of-God Pastors, Venerable Monastics, and all the Faithful Children of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the Diaspora and in Ukraine,

“It is the day of Resurrection, let us be illumined O people! Pascha, the Lord’s Pascha; for Christ God has led us from death unto life, and from earth to heaven, as we sing a song of victory.” (Paschal Canon)

Very Reverend and Reverend Fathers! Dear Brothers and Sisters!

CHRIST IS RISEN!

Today the visible and invisible worlds rejoice, today human voices unite themselves with the voices of the Holy Angels who glorify the Saviour of the world, Christ, risen from the dead. By His resurrection Christ opened to us the path to eternal and blessed life. He, as the Sun of Righteousness, shines His Divine Radiance upon the entire universe, pouring out the rays of His salvific light on all who with faith and love approach Him.

St. Gregory the Theologian, in his paschal sermon, declares: “Pascha - this is the feast of feasts and the festival of festivals, which outshines all other solemnities as much as the sun outshines the stars.”

The entire Orthodox world has just recently experienced the events of Passion week. All we Orthodox Christians have spiritually experienced the derision and suffering which Christ experienced during the final days of His earthly life. One of His disciples betrayed Him; though innocent, He was condemned, scourged, spat upon, mocked, and crucified upon the Cross. It seemed that death, hatred, and evil had triumphed. Some believed that the Saviour would have no followers, for He was no longer among the living.

But we see that Christ, through His Resurrection, was victorious over the enemy of the human race, He destroyed the gates of hell, “by death He trampled down death,” and opened to us the doors of the Heavenly Kingdom.

By His Resurrection Christ showed forth His Divinity, and offered us the promise of our own future resurrection.

The Resurrection of Christ is the foundation of our faith, and faith is that which is most important and necessary in the life of every person. The faith of the apostles was strengthened by the Resurrection of Christ, which was renewed in them by the Holy Spirit and gave them the strength and inspiration to preach the word of God, and to establish the Church of Christ on earth.

The holy apostles speak of the Resurrection of Christ not only as an event in the earthly life of the Saviour, but as an event in the life of each of us who receive the good news of Pascha: "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit which dwells in you" (Rm. 8:11).

Through His death on the cross Christ accomplished the cleansing of the sins of the entire human race. The Resurrection of the Saviour has granted eternal life to each of us. But faith in the suffering and resurrection of Jesus Christ is, by itself, insufficient. A deep unity with God in all aspects of our life is absolutely necessary. The Holy Apostle Paul teaches us: "For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin" (Rm. 6: 5-6).

Our earthly life, and our attitude towards God and neighbour, should bear the seal of an unbreakable unity with the Lord God. St. John the Theologian says: "If any one serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there shall my servant be also; if any one serves me, the Father will honor him" (Jn. 12:26).

Observing the actual state of things in the world we see the spiritual and moral decay of humanity. Hatred and wickedness rule in the world, which leads to murder and war. The contemporary person runs after material values, ignoring the spiritual. So let us not forget about our youth and children - let us call them to their natal Church and to God. For they are our future. May the Risen Christ help all of us to conquer sin and enter onto the path of salvation.

During this year we will mark the 100th anniversary of our Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Canada and in the USA. Let us prayerfully remember all the founders, benefactors, and builders of our temples and strive to continue their work for the benefit of the Holy Church.

Dear Brothers and Sisters! The Holy Evangelist John the Theologian writes that the first words of Christ the Saviour to His disciples after His Resurrection from the dead were "Peace be to you" (Jn. 20:19). We should receive these words with special feeling today, because it is exactly peace and concord which the contemporary world needs. "When we lose peace, we then become enemies of those who heard from Christ 'Peace be to you,'" says St. John Chrysostom.

And so let us strive to protect this peace, and in our prayers to ask the Risen Christ that He would rule in Ukraine, in our communities, families, and most importantly in the souls of each one of us. During this magnificent feast of the Holy Pascha of the Lord we prayerfully beseech the Christ the Risen Saviour and our God, that He would bless our Ukrainian nation and grant it unity, peace, spiritual and economic growth.

May the Risen Christ strengthen our faith, fill our hearts with spiritual joy, and increase love, that we would be able to enjoy the joy of the bright Paschal days in complete fullness.

May the Blessing of the Risen Christ be with all of you!

Truly, Christ is Risen!

With Archpastoral Blessings,

+YURIJ, Metropolitan of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada
+ANTONY, Metropolitan of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA and Diaspora
+JEREMIAH, Archbishop of the Ukrainian Orthodox Eparchies of Brasil and South America
+DANIEL, Archbishop of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA and Western Europe
+ILARION, Bishop of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada
+ANDRIY, Bishop of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada