

Paschal Message of His Eminence Tikhon, Archbishop of Omsk and Siberia.

Pascha of Christ, 2019

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Paschal message to all faithful children of the Russian True Orthodox Church in the Fatherland and abroad

**Dear to the Lord, archpastors, the most pious pastors and the God-loving congregation of the
Russian True Orthodox Church -**

CHRIST IS RISEN!

With great joy the Church asserts on the day of Christian Orthodox Pascha the beginning of its eternal being with God, and we Christians, with unearthly joy, heed this holy Paschal greeting - CHRIST IS RISEN! After all, we become partakers of eternal life, from death granted to us by our Savior and Redeemer, our Lord Jesus Christ!

The joyful all-forgiving mood, according to the word of St. John Chrysostom, read at matins, covers this Paschal night both the pious and indifferent, the kind and unkind. Such is the gift of a special, mysterious grace, bestowed on believers without merit and deeds in anticipation of the joys of paradise received by Orthodox Christians from the Lord.

The resurrection of the Lord was a turning point in the life of the disciples. It turned their sadness into an extraordinary joy, and the fallen were inspired by their courageous determination, which made world teachers and preachers of the Gospel out of poor fishermen, who changed the whole of history.

Descended on the Apostles on the day of Pentecost, according to the promises of the Savior, the Holy Spirit affirmed them in the faith of Christ and poured the gifts of God upon them through His grace. He approved them for preaching and implementing in life the teachings of Jesus Christ, for the dispensation of the Church created by Jesus Christ. The Church, headed by the Son of God sitting at the right hand of the Father, is mysteriously led by the Holy Spirit. She internally unites her children and unites them with Christ.

The Orthodox Church, by definition of the Apostle Paul, is the Body of Christ, which has all the fullness of God's grace: healing, restoring and saving each person. And only in true Orthodoxy, residing in the bosom of the true Church of Christ, can we find answers to all the questions of our heart. Only Orthodoxy — genuine, true Orthodoxy, sacredly preserving moral, spiritual laws, makes the Christian seeking the human soul a rational path to salvation, and true Orthodoxy itself in the bosom of the true Orthodox Church is the gracious Path of salvation.

The infallibility of Orthodoxy lies precisely in the fact that it is not one of human teachings or religions, and not even one of the numerous “Christian interpretations of the Gospel,” as Protestants and “Orthodox” ecumenists teach. No, Orthodoxy is the revelation of God, and itself the Truth. It needs

no change, no addition. It has everything you need for salvation; we can only humbly accept it into our heart and mind, assimilate it with all our being. Therefore, a departure from the Orthodox Church of Christ inevitably leads to a departure from Orthodoxy, and therefore to a departure from the fullness of the divine Truth, from eternal Life.

And to this day, the Risen Son of God, Jesus Christ, is the Head of His Church, and from Him, from the Immortal Head of the Church, life-giving Grace flows forth from Her through the entire Church, which animates us from eternal death unto eternity. In Her are all the Holy Mysteries and the holy virtues, with which we are purified and renewed, reborn, sanctified and saved.

And when we imagine the immense majesty of the Church of Christ, before the name of the Head of which "*every knee of the heavenly, earthly and the underworld bowed down*" (Philippians 2:10), with what bewilderment, though sacred and touching, the words of the Apostle Paul about Priscilla and Aquila and their home Church - "*Greet Priscilla and Aquila and their house Church*" (Romans 16, 1-6).

And today, when we experience bright Paschal joy, even the most miserable house churches seem to be bright heavenly churches on this wonderful holy Night. The hearts of believers are filled with sweet love for God, for people, for everything that exists. I want to hug everyone and everything, the whole world.

Indeed, on the one hand, there is such immeasurable grandeur of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, and on the other, as it were, accommodation in the narrow size of the private house of Priscilla and Aquila ...

This remark of the holy apostle about Priscilla and Aquila and about their home Church is of great, divinely revealing importance for us, because it indicates that the essence of the Church of Christ is not in its external size and not in earthly grandeur, but in that which undoubtedly contained with Priscilla and Aquila in their home church, despite its small size. In it are visible the true faith of Christ, and the grace of the holy Sacraments, and agreement with the Universal Church, and the apostolic ministry. So, water is always water, whether it will be in a vast ocean, or in a river, in celestial clouds, or in a drop of rain. The essence of water is the same everywhere.

This thought, which the apostle Paul gives in his letter to the Romans, must be especially taken into account when someone begins to measure the greatness of his local or national church, his diocese or his parish by the size of the earth, or by its population, or wealth and external brilliance. In these cases, it is good to remember Priscilla and Aquila and their home church when confronted with such proud arrogance.

As the apostle Paul writes to the Corinthians: "*We are oppressed from everywhere, but not constrained; we are in desperate circumstances, but do not despair; we are persecuted, but not abandoned; cast down, but not destroyed. We always carry the death of the Lord Jesus in our body, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body*" (2 Cor. 4: 8).

And further: "*In everything we show ourselves as servants of God, in great patience, in disasters, in need, in close circumstances, under blows, in dungeons, in exiles, in works, in vigils, in fasting, in purity, in prudence, in generosity, in goodness, in the Holy Spirit, in unfeigned love, in the word of truth, in the power of God, with the weapon of truth in the right and left hand, in honor and disgrace, in reproof and praise: we are honored by deceivers, but we are true; we are unknown, but we are recognized; we are honored dead, but behold, we live; we are punished, but we do not die; we are grieved, and we always rejoice; we are poor, but we enrich many; we have nothing, but we have everything*" (2 Cor. 6: 4-10).

The Resurrection of Christ once and for all opened the gates of eternity before humanity. How

insignificant in comparison with this true life our quarrels and shameful divisions into hostile groups appear before our consciousness, our rancor, which blocks our entrance to the Kingdom of Heaven, which many grave sinners can deserve of us, repented of their sins and crimes, but no one will go in there, keeping anger, hatred or pride in their heart.

And if we thought more about the inevitable death and resurrection for each of us, then how quickly the remnants of anger and thirst for revenge would melt in us. No longer hated, but deeply unhappy, we would have seemed to us apostates and daring to create splits, condemning themselves to eternal destruction. After all, their enjoyment of temporary “victories” over the faithful children of the Church can last only for a while — either several years or even several days, but the torment of their souls beyond the grave will last forever. Do not say that here, on earth, conscience will torment them much more painfully than involuntary poverty and humiliation in our deprivations will oppress us.

And we, as subjected to deprivations for loyalty to holy convictions, will not be jealous of them, as having preserved in our poverty what is most dear in the world, that is, a not conscientious conscience. We will not repent of our firm standing in the truth if we have not defiled ourselves cruelly to the defenselessness. We will not hide in ourselves a thirst for revenge on our offenders.

But woe to those of us who will look at reward with gloating, not with compassion. Those will have no place in the resurrection: the same fate awaits them behind the tomb as their hated enemies, and in real life they don't have to taste the fullness of joy about Christ's Resurrection, for other beginnings, Christ brought us another spirit from His life-giving tomb.

It is not in vain that the Lord, after His resurrection, offered peace and joy to His followers. Both of these were preserved by His disciples, although they suffered more than anyone else on earth and, of course, thousands of times more than us, deprived of beautiful temples and the possibility, for the most part, of open ministry. And if they found in themselves grace-filled power, firstly, to forgive offenders, and secondly, to rejoice in God in the midst of calamities, then how ineffectual will we be if we open our hearts to discouragement, grumbling, anger and revenge. May the grace of the Resurrection of Christ deliver us from all this!

But today, on the day of the Resurrection of Christ, joyful for all true Orthodox Christians, we will remember that only being in truth, spiritual wakefulness, only tremulous restraint in our souls of the Paschal light, only a fervent prayer of penitential hope in Christ the Life-giver, who in death **corrected** death and gave the **faithful** eternal life. It makes us worthy to become participants in the spiritual rebirth of the world.

After the great tragic events, after the suffering of the cross, the sad spectacle of Calvary, after grief, for human cruelty and injustice and for our personal sinfulness, after days of sorrow, we should rejoice, exult in light: Christ is Risen! As the radiant sun with its light disperses the darkness and the impenetrable darkness, so the light that has arisen from the grave - the Life-Giver-Christ, with His rising, drives away the darkness of ignorance, the bitterness of our sinful life, illuminates the hopelessness of our temporary life. Our eternal salvation is complete. “*Christ is risen from the dead, the firstborn of the dead!*” (1 Cor. 15, 20).

Truly joyful, great and saving for all mankind is the Day of the Lord's Resurrection, in which the rejected Stone is *become the head of the corner* (Matt. 21.42), in which the Lord sacrificed Himself for us, and we eat from this sacrifice as from the bread of life, and at every time we delight our souls with His honest blood, as if from some life-giving source. And not only we, people, rejoice in the resurrected Lord, treat this event with the greatest reverence, but with us the sky rejoices, the whole Church of the *firstborn in heaven written* rejoices (Heb. 12, 23).

Let us consider the joy of our Lord Jesus Christ on this bright Day of His Resurrection, and we will try

to keep the Paschal mood for as long as possible by spending our Christian living, strengthening ourselves in faith, hope, and especially in the Love of Christ.

“Thy Resurrection, O Christ our Savior, the Angels in heaven sing, enable us on earth to glorify Thee in purity of heart!”

I congratulate all of you, children of the Church of Christ with all my heart on the Pascha of Christ!

CHRIST IS RISEN !

TRULY HE IS RISEN!

+ humble Tikhon,
By the grace of God, the Archbishop of Omsk and Siberia,
First Hierarch of the Russian True-Orthodox Church

Pascha of the Lord,
15/28 April 2019
Omsk.