

PASCHAL HOMILY
To all the faithful children of the Russian True Orthodox Church
in the Fatherland and in the Diaspora

Dear brothers in the Lord, Archpastors, most reverent pastors,
zealous monastics and strugglers, God-loving flock
of the Russian True Orthodox Church

CHRIST IS RISEN!

This wondrous Paschal greeting again thrills our souls, for as Christians through the Resurrection of Christ our Savior and Redeemer, we become partakers of eternal life!

“The bright day of the Resurrection gave the human race the guarantee of victory over death,” and the Savior's Ascension to heaven, lifting man to the heavens, changes his earthly abode and “opens up for him free access to the highest: for it is incompatible for human nature, which has overcome death, to remain in the abodes of death”(St. Athanasius, Archbishop of Alexandria, from the Word for the Ascension of the Lord).

Saint Philaret of Moscow calls the God-manhood of Christ the key of David, which unlocks all the doors. “The turning of this key,” he says, “is the Resurrection of Christ. The dungeon is opened to the prisoners; paradise opens and accepts the cast out; the heavens open and await the elect.” The Lord is Life Itself, and life does not die, but gives life to the dead.

Christ puts death to death; He dethrones Satan. He is the joy of those on high. He, who died for our sins and flesh, resurrects us by His coming. He was nailed to the cross, spat upon and beaten. They slapped Him on the cheek and mocked Him ... and He endured all this for us, for the sake of His love for us: in order to destroy the tyranny of sin, in order to destroy the stronghold of the devil, to trample the bonds of death, to open the gates of heaven to us, to free us from the curse that weighed upon us, to abolish the original condemnation, to teach patience and educate us in it, so that nothing can grieve us in this present life - neither insults, nor resentment, nor shame, nor evil suspicions, nor anything else. The Day of the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is the foundation of the world, the beginning of reconciliation, the cessation of hostile actions, the destruction of death, the defeat of the devil.

The Risen Christ destroyed the pantheon of the Hellenic gods, overthrew all idols, destroyed the altars of the wicked stained with human blood, stripped the devil's power over us, put the demons to flight, tamed the wild tribes, and elevates to heaven those who believe in Him. This day He fulfilled every Old Testament prototype and prophecy.

After great tragic events, after suffering on the cross, the sad spectacle of Golgotha, after the sorrow for the cruelty and injustice of mankind and for our personal sinfulness, after days of sorrow, we should rejoice, rejoice with light: Christ is risen! As the radiant sun with its light disperses darkness and obscure darkness, so the Light that has risen from the grave - the Lifegiver Christ by His Resurrection drives away the darkness of ignorance, the bitterness of our sinful life, and illuminates our joyless temporary earthly wandering.

The world around us is full of indifference, cold indifference and spiritual coarseness. As lawlessness multiplies in the land, so hatred also grows in men's hearts. Today, we feel this very acutely, but for us, who remain faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ, Grace abounds to cover us from this evil worldly trend. For the Paschal mystery of Christ's love conquers all the hatred of the world, and death itself, and the darkness of human errors and iniquities cannot darken and extinguish the Divine light of Christ's Resurrection, which shines and will shine throughout the world.

And now, "on this chosen and holy day," Christ appears to us and as once to the Myrrhbearing women he says: "Rejoice!" (Matthew 28.9). And we rejoice and tremble with joy. Our hearts are filled with holy feelings, we are ready to embrace the whole world.

Our eternal salvation has been accomplished. *Christ is risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep!* (1 Cor. 15:20).

If there be no Resurrection, how could the truth of God be preserved, when so many evil people prosper and so many good ones suffer and end their lives in suffering? Where will all these people receive a reward if there is no Resurrection? ... Those who walk in a bad way and lead an unclean life, as the prophet says (Psalm 9: 26), what justification will they have when the image of the mystery of the Resurrection is presented to us daily in seeds and in plants? After all, the seed must first decay, and then there is birth. However, where God acts, there is no need for speculation. Those who know the immeasurable wisdom of the Resurrection, will not fear death: of what else will they be afraid?

How bright, how wonderful is the Feast of Christ's Resurrection! How joyfully and solemnly the Church celebrates it! Can any other celebration in the world compare with the splendor of the Paschal service? The Divine service on the bright Paschal night brings all delight and jubilation! Here the believing soul can truly imitate the Most Blessed Virgin Mary's hymn: "My soul doth magnify the Lord and my spirit hath rejoiced in God, my Savior!" (Luke 1:46-7).

During the days of the Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ, during the holy holidays of the Church, but especially during the days of the radiant Pascha, the soul, prepared by weeks of fasting, cleansed and freed from the shackles of sin, becomes capable of meeting with God's joy, in the anticipation of the paradisaic state that is incomparably superior to all our earthly feelings and ideas about eternal bliss in the Kingdom of Heaven.

The holy and great mystery of Paschal joy is for us not only a small reflection of paradise, but also tangible evidence that we can receive this bliss, even realizing the weakness of our spiritual strength. But strong is the One to whom we strive to cling, Whom we want to love with all our heart, with all our soul, on Whom we place all our hopes.

Let us answer the call of the Risen Lord Jesus Christ! Let us hasten to the great feast of faith in order to participate in this bright celebration, let us rejoice spiritually and with joy in our hearts, let us praise the Risen Christ: "Thy Resurrection, O Christ Savior, the Angels in heaven sing; enable us on earth to glorify thee in purity of heart!"

All of you, children of the Church of Christ
Congratulations from the bottom of my heart
with the bright Resurrection of Christ!

**CHRIST IS RISEN!
TRULY, HE IS RISEN!**

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

Pascha of the Lord,
19 April / 2 May, 2021
Omsk