

# **Paschal Epistle of His Eminence Tikhon, Archbishop of Omsk and Siberia. Pascha of Christ, 2023**

**Paschal Epistle to all the faithful children of the Russian True Orthodox Church, both in the Homeland and in the Diaspora.**

Dear fellow Archpastors in the Lord, most reverent pastors, and God-loving flock of the Russian True Orthodox Church

## **CHRIST IS RISEN!**

On the day of the Orthodox Christian Pascha, when the Church triumphantly and joyfully celebrates the beginning of its eternal being with God, we Christians, with unearthly joy, heed this sacred Paschal greeting - CHRIST IS RISEN! For we become partakers of eternal life, given to us by the Conqueror of death, our Savior, Redeemer and our Lord Jesus Christ!

Our Paschal service is a special, extraordinary celebration! This festival gathers under the vaults of the holy temples, a large host of believers, whose faces are illuminated with joy and happiness. And the reason for this triumph, this joy, is the Risen Christ, who has given us eternal life.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior, rose from the dead. He conquered death, which means that death is not almighty. Christ rose from the dead and thereby gave us the hope that we will also rise to a new life, and together with us, all the good things, even the smallest ones, that we did in our lives, for we did them in the name of Christ, will also rise. Sin, unrighteousness, lawlessness, offenses and injustices – all this will die and perish, for in the Kingdom of Christ we will live in eternal truth and love.

When this sacred event took place, Christ Himself announced it, appearing first to Mary Magdalene, the myrrh bearers, and then to the holy apostles. He also appeared to two of His disciples on their way to Emmaus. At each of His appearances, at each meeting with Him, they were filled with trembling joy. "Did not our heart burn within us?" they asked each other after His appearance to them (Luke 24:32). They were filled with this joy and, together with the sermon about the Risen Christ, carried it throughout the world to all nations.

And now, "on this appointed and holy day," Christ appears to us and, as once to myrrh-bearing women, says: "Rejoice!" (Matt. 28:9). And we rejoice, we tremble with joy. Our hearts are filled with good and holy feelings, and we are ready to embrace the whole world.

But why do we rejoice? Why does joy overcome us? Just yesterday, despised and humiliated, the Lord hung crucified on the Cross. Just yesterday they buried His most pure Body and with Him all their aspirations and hopes. Truth and Goodness in His person were desecrated and trampled upon. A heavy tombstone was placed on them. Everything was over. The impenetrable darkness of night covered the earth. Evil and lawlessness triumphed.

But how could the bonds of death hold the Author of life (Acts 2:24)? He is risen! And with Him resurrected everything that gives life to the immortal human spirit, that gives the beginning of new eternal life.

The Pascha of Christ delivers us, faithful followers of Christ, from all sorrow, and not only those who are benevolent and carefree, but also those who are grieving and miserable, sick and poor, lonely and old, and even doomed to death. Christ, as the omniscient God, personally knowing each of us individually, became a man like us in everything except sin, loved each of us, and by His Resurrection gave us eternal life.

In its full power, the glory of Christ will be revealed to faithful Christians at His second glorious and terrible coming; now He gives us mysterious powers for the resurrection of our souls, calling us to a radical change in our lives, so that we instill in our hearts, instead of malice, love and forgiveness, instead of self-will, obedience, instead of depravity, chastity and family virtues.

Just yesterday, we experienced all the divine services of Holy Week, which are touching and deeply meaningful, and are dedicated to the holy memories of the salvific feat and sufferings of the incarnated Son of God, which He was pleased to take upon Himself in His incarnation - "who for us men, and for our salvation..." Performing these divine services, the Church, as it were, follows her Lord and Savior step by step. And every step, every moment of His redemptive suffering prayerfully, mournfully and gratefully sings in prayers, liturgical rites and sacred rites.

But Holy Week is over! And behold, we see that the tomb is empty, and the shroud no longer covers anyone: Christ is Risen! Sorrow and sadness were replaced by the joy that the Risen Christ Himself predicted to His disciples: "And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." (John 16:22). And this joy is the joy of the Risen Lord. He rose from the grave as the Conqueror of hades and death — everything is flooded with the dazzling light of His glorious Resurrection, and the joy that He predicted to His disciples has now become the possession of all the faithful children of His Church.

The Church of Christ renews this joy of the Resurrection every year, from year to year on the bright Paschal days. She proclaims it to the whole world, to all mankind. And the faithful children of the Church hear her Gospel, rejoice and triumph. But it is not for nothing that we read in the Holy Gospel the words of the Savior: "Fear not, little flock." In our time – a terrible time, a time of apostasy from all the foundations of faith and morality, which we now see – the number of true believers is really a small flock compared to the majority of humanity, which has actually lost the true faith and trampled on all the foundations of Christian morality! At the sight of what people now allow themselves, who have completely forgotten about Christian purity, modesty, and chastity – and not only allow, but even affirm that all the abominations and dirt with which life is now filled are something legitimate, natural and deserving of approval – Seeing this, you involuntarily recall the word of the Holy Scriptures, which speaks of how "man [...] joined the senseless cattle and became like them..."(Psalm 49:20). Yes, he not only became like them, but also became worse than them, for the cattle do not know those abominations about which the Apostle said that it is "shameful to eat and speak" about them – it's a shame to even talk about them, and now those abominations are being created by sons and daughters of men who have lost their shame and conscience...

But “let not my mouth speak the works of men”... Let us turn to the Bright Feast of the Resurrection. In the Gospel reading, which we heard on Pascha night at the Divine Liturgy, there were such words: “And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness overcome it not...”(John 1:5). The Divine Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome – extinguish it. So the bright, unfading light of the Resurrection of Christ illuminates our lives, shines in the world, and the darkness of human delusions and iniquities cannot darken or extinguish it - "and your joy no man taketh from you."(John 16:22)

In our difficult, sorrowful, truly apocalyptic time, we need nothing more than this pure, bright Paschal joy. She alone can give us spiritual strength and the necessary courage to endure all the countless trials that befall us in modern life; she alone can help us to renounce all burdensome earthly things and ascend in the spirit of grief – to heaven, “where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God” (Colossians 3:1) And where we ourselves, in due time, will be able to ascend to Him, into the heavenly abodes prepared for us (John 14:2-3), if, to the end, here on earth, in spite of any sorrows, trials and temptations, we remain faithful to Him.

On this bright and joyous day, we remember how the Holy Gospel preserved for us in the form of a question the mournful prediction of the Savior: “When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8). The Holy Fathers explain to us that here the Lord is not saying that at His coming there will not be a single believer on earth, but that the number of true believers will be reduced to an extreme, and they will be forced to hide from the unbelieving majority, like the Catacomb Church during times of persecution. And, at the same time, He also predicted that “because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.” (Matt. 24:12). Do we not see that this sad and ominous prophecy is already beginning to come true in our day? Is it not because of the multiplication of iniquities and the cooling of love that disagreements, strife, enmity and mutual bitterness are multiplied in people, and not only in the whole world, but also within our church enclosure? It becomes obvious to us that the further humanity moves away from Christ, the more boldly death triumphs, the more sorrows there are in the world, the greater the despondency of peoples from the disasters that are coming to the universe.

“And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another,” predicts the Lord in the Gospel. Is this not the reality of our day? What are we not witnessing now? But the saddest thing is that people cannot understand the causes of all these calamities, they cannot understand that salvation is not in politicking, not in external reforms of life and not in its material “progress” – but in a return to the Christian virtues of faith hope and love, in a return to the Gospel ideals and in the churching of life, in complete, humble and loving obedience to the Mother Church and Her salvific guidance.

His Beatitude Metropolitan Anthony, in agreement with the ancient holy fathers and teachers of the Church, pointed out that the special, exceptional joy of Pascha, which the believing soul experiences on the bright Paschal night, is, as it were, the predestination of that eternal, unfading joy that will be the foundation of the paradisaical life, heavenly bliss, about which the last words of the Creed speak - "the life of the age to come."... Oh, that all the children of the Orthodox Church would enter into this life of the future age, into eternal blessedness, about which at the last judgment the eternal and Righteous

Judge will say to His faithful: “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” (Matt. 25:34)...

But one must know well and remember that the path to this pure, bright, unearthly joy of the Resurrection lies through “Golgotha”: in order to be resurrected with Christ, one must first be “crucified” with Him! And this should not be overly feared. The apostle says that “the present temporal suffering, which we voluntarily or involuntarily endure in the Name of Christ, is nothing in comparison with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rom. 8:18). In these sufferings for Christ, even in this earthly life, we will begin to foresee that heavenly bliss, inexpressible by any human words, about which the Holy Apostle Paul speaks: “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” (1 Corinthians 2:9).

Why do we love our wondrous, incomparable Paschal service so much?

Precisely because it gives us a foretaste of that heavenly bliss to which the Risen Lord – the Conqueror of death and hades – calls us all. And this joyful bright, incomparable with anything earthly, Paschal jubilation is given to us by our True Orthodox Church.

May the Resurrected Lord vouchsafe all of us to be partakers of this bright joy of His Resurrection and to pass with it into the future eternal life awaiting us all!

**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 Hierarchy of the Russian True Orthodox Church*  
*Pascha of the Lord, April 3/16*  
*In the year of 2023, Omsk*