08/04/2026

Patriarchal Encyclical on the Occasion of Holy Pascha



† B A R T H O L O M E W

BY GOD’S MERCY

ARCHBISHOP OF CONSTANTINOPLE – NEW ROME

AND ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH

TO THE ENTIRE PLENITUDE OF THE CHURCH:

GRACE, PEACE, AND MERCY FROM CHRIST, RISEN IN GLORY

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Most honourable brother Hierarchs and blessed children in the Lord,

Having arrived, through fasting, prayer, and solemnity, at the radiant and all-festal

day of Holy Pascha, we hymn and glorify the world-saving Resurrection of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ, which marks the manifest victory of life over death, renews all creation, and opens to humanity the way of deification by grace. The Church of Christ preserves the paschal experience in her liturgical life, in the labours of the Saints and Martyrs of the faith, in the eschatological impulse of monasticism, in the proclamation of the Gospel "to the ends of the earth," in theology and the ecclesial arts, in the good witness of the faithful in the world, in the culture of love and solidarity, and in the immovable certainty that evil does not have the final word in history.

The Resurrection of the Lord is lived as a Christ-bestowed freedom, which inspires, nourishes, and strengthens the creative powers of the human person and the good struggle for "whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable,"[1] while reminding us all that the journey toward the Resurrection is inseparably bound to the Cross. The joy of the Cross and the Resurrection has preserved the people of God from identifying themselves with the spirit of this world, while at the same time safeguarding them from barren insularity and a spirituality devoid of dynamism and hope-bearing breath. The life of the faithful, in the crucified and risen Christ "for us men," still today refutes every alien narrative of Christian ethos as a "morality of the weak," supposedly embodied in humility, forgiveness, sacrificial love, asceticism, the Lord's saying "but I say to you, do not resist the evil one,"[2] and other principles and dispositions that belong to the very core of our identity. Nothing could be further from the truth than this reading of the ethos of Christianity — of sacrificial love that "does not seek its own," a love interwoven with courage, boldness, and existential authenticity. Pascha is a hymn to this freedom, to faith "working through love,"[3] which is not our own achievement but grace and a gift from above, and which is lived in the holy Sacraments of the Church and in the "mystery" of service to one's neighbour. Indeed, "love for God does not in any way tolerate hatred toward one's fellow human being."[4]

The Church of Christ — the "salt of the earth," the "light of the world," the city "set on a hill," the lamp placed "on the lampstand"[5] — bears active witness in the world, before the signs of the times, about the grace that has come and "the hope that is in us."[6] The message of the Cross and the Resurrection resounds today as a Gospel of peace, reconciliation, and justice. War, hatred, and injustice stand opposed to the fundamental Christian principles for whose realization and establishment the people of God pray and labour each day. In the light of the Resurrection, we beseech the Lord on behalf of the victims of wartime violence, the orphans, the mothers who mourn their children, and all those who bear in body and

soul the effects of human cruelty and callousness. “Christ is risen” is a denial and condemnation of violence and fear and an invitation to a life of peace. War brings forth lamentation and death; the Resurrection conquers death and bestows incorruptibility.

Before the daily images of the cruelty of war, the Church raises her voice and proclaims the sacredness of the human person — of every concrete human being anywhere on earth — and the duty of absolute respect for that dignity; and she calls upon us to “know our own worth, honour the Prototype, recognise the power of the mystery, and understand for whose sake Christ died.”[7] The Resurrection of the Lord is the restoration of the human being to his pre-eternal calling. As the “beginning of another eternal life,” it heals alienating relationships and establishes the peace “which surpasses all understanding”[8] — a peace that encompasses worldly reconciliation and pacification.

Inspired by God, the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church — the tenth anniversary of whose convocation we honour this year — underlined the duty of the Church “to encourage whatever truly serves the cause of peace (Rom. 14:19) and opens the way to justice, brotherhood, true freedom, and mutual love among all the children of the one heavenly Father, as well as among all peoples who make up the one human family.”[9]

Holy Pascha is the whole of our spiritual civilization, the very core of our piety. The Resurrection of the Lord is also our own resurrection in the present age, and at the same time a prefiguration and foretaste of the “common resurrection of all human beings” and of the renewal of the whole creation. Illumined by the all-radiant light of the face of the Risen Christ, and glorifying in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs His all-holy Name — the Prince of Peace, who is with us “always, unto the end of the age” [10]— we wish you a blessed Resurrection, a paschal season filled with divine gifts, and every day of your lives likewise, crying out the universal proclamation of joy: “Christ is risen! Truly the Lord is risen!”

Phanar, Holy Pascha 2026

† Bartholomew of Constantinople

fervent supplicant for you all

to the Risen Lord

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1. Phil. 4:8.

2. Matt. 5:39.

3. Gal. 5:6.

4. St. Maximus the Confessor, Chapters on Love, I.15. PG 90, 964.

5. Matt. 5:13-15.

6. 1 Pet. 3:15.

7. St. Gregory the Theologian, Oration 1, On Holy Pascha and on Tardiness, PG 35, 397.

8. Phil. 4:7.

9. The Mission of the Orthodox Church in Today’s World, C, § 5.

10. Matt. 28:20.

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