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Serbian Orthodox Church issues Patriarchal Paschal Encyclical 2020



The Serbian Orthodox Church has issued its Patriarchal Paschal Encyclical 2020. Read the full text down below:

The Serbian Orthodox Church to her spiritual children at Pascha, 2020

+IRINEJ

By the Grace of God

Orthodox Archbishop of Pec, Metropolitan of Belgrade Karlovci and Serbian Patriarch, with all the Hierarchs of the Serbian Orthodox Church to all the clergy, monastics, and all the sons and daughters of our Holy Church: grace, mercy and peace from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, with the joyous Paschal greeting:

Christ is Risen!

This is the day of Resurrection; let us be illumined by the feast!
Let us embrace each other joyously! Let us say even to those
who hate us: Let us forgive all by the Resurrection;
and so let us cry: Christ is risen from the dead,
trampling down death by death,
and upon those in the tombs bestowing life!
[The Stichera of Pascha from Matins]

Here we are, dear brothers and sisters and dear spiritual children, in the festivity and joy of the great Feast Day: Pascha. Today is the Feast Day of the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us rejoice and celebrate! Pascha is our greatest feast day, the feast of the victory of Life over death, God over Satan, Man, in Christ Jesus, over sin. Christ is risen from the dead! Let us say it to all and make glad all and everyone, even those who hate Him, the Resurrected God Man, and us, His inheritance here on earth, and those who do not believe and still doubt that He is the Redeemer and Savior of the world.

Brothers and sisters and dear spiritual children, the essence of the mystery of Christ's Resurrection is this, that "He Who Is," is at the same time both the Son of God and the Son of man, and He has already on the Cross on Great and Holy Friday, and finally on this day of the Resurrection, conquered Satan and defeated his rule and power. Death and Hades are defeated. The Holy Apostle Paul in victorious elation asks: "Death, where is your sting? Hades, where is your victory?" St. Basil the Great, archbishop of Cappadocia, contemplating the mystery of the Resurrection, further explains the words of the Holy Apostle Paul by saying that the Lord Jesus Christ gave Himself in our place to death, "which had kept us who were sold to sin in slavery, and having descended through the Cross into hades, sundered the chains of death; and rose on the third day, opening to all the pathway to resurrection from the dead. He, Christ the Lord," says Saint Basil, "has become the First Fruit of the dead, the First-Born from the dead, so that He can be everything and all, being the first in everything."

Amazed at the wonderful Resurrection from the tomb, the church poet sings, "Lord, how you were born of the Blessed Virgin and how you were raised from the tomb, we do not know, but we glorify You as Savior and Redeemer." Celebrating with him the Resurrection of Christ, we are also amazed at this great mystery and sing: "Christ is risen from the dead!

Trampling down death by death and upon those in the tombs bestowing life!" Like the sons of Israel, who when they had crossed the Red Sea gave thanks and praise to God; we likewise, brothers and sisters and dear spiritual children, having gone through the sadness and sorrow of Great and Holy Friday and Saturday, and finding ourselves in the joy of the Resurrection, we bring praise to God and exclaim: glory to You, O Lord, our Savior and our Redeemer, who saves us from the power of sin, death and the devil!

In the truth of the Risen Christ, who appeared to the myrrhbearing women, the apostles and others, we stand and we are! The resurrected Lord Jesus Christ is the unwavering Foundation of not only our faith and our Church, but our entire existence and all that is. The Holy Apostle Paul said: "If Christ is not resurrected, then our faith is in vain, our hope is in vain, we are still under sin!" In the Resurrection is found the meaning of all that exists, and without the Resurrection, everything, even life itself, is meaningless. The mystery of the Incarnation of God, the Logos, that is, His birth in Bethlehem and His suffering as the Lamb of God in Jerusalem, as well as all that happened not only in Jerusalem and Judea, but throughout the entire history of the world, is revealed in the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We, brothers and sisters, the Christ-bearing Serbian people, view ourselves and our history in the light of the Resurrection of Christ. We are people of the Cross and Resurrection. We suffer with Christ, and with Him we resurrect. All of our history is cross-bearing and Christ-resurrectional, located between Golgotha and the Resurrection. Last year, we celebrated the grand jubilee, the eight hundred years of autocephaly of our Church. In that jubilee, we have looked at the breadth, depth and height of our existence for the past eight hundred years. This year of the Blessing of the Lord, we are celebrating the 100th anniversary of the restoration of the status of the Patriarchate of our Church. After the Golgotha suffering by our people and our Church in the 19th century and in the first decades of the 20th century, the Metropolitanates and Dioceses of our Church, fragmented into the territories of previous empires and states, merged into a single Serbian Orthodox Church, thus restoring our ancient Patriarchate of Pec. It was a blessing from God to our people and our Church for our — until then unprecedented — suffering and demonstrated endurance. Perhaps, the

Holy Martyr Deacon Avakum has expressed it the best when, refusing to renounce the Orthodox Faith in the face of torture and dreadful death, exclaimed, “The Serb belongs to Christ, and rejoices in death!” God has blessed our unity in the battle for the victory of truth and justice. With the grace of the Holy Spirit and with the strength of unwavering faith, hope and love, we have restored the Patriarchate of Pec over the entire area inhabited by Orthodox Serbs, to the joy of our ancestors, and to the delight of us all.

Previously, dear spiritual children, like ancient Israel, we have passed through Golgothas and terrors, across the blue seas and their depths, and then experienced freedom and unity. The Golgothas and Resurrections of our history tell us that we must never, even on Great and Holy Friday, lose faith and hope in God. Wasn’t the year of 1915 the Great Friday in our recent history? Wasn’t 1916 the year of our Albanian Golgotha? And didn’t 1917 look like our funeral and burial in “blue graves”? And behold the miracles! The very next year, 1918, was the year of our victory; the year our freedom and of our resurrection, and 1920 was the year of our church and spiritual renewal.

Looking at this marvelous work of God in our history, we can exclaim with the Psalmist: Great are You, O Lord, and Your works are marvelous, and there is no word sufficient to hymn Your wonders! Truly miraculous are the events of the liberation and unification of our people, which preceded the restoration of our church unity and our Patriarchate. All of us are inexorably reminded of the miraculous deliverance of the children of Israel from Egypt, their wandering through the Sinai, and their entering into the Promised Land. Unfortunately, after all that, we again, through our own and others’ guilt, found ourselves at a historical crucifixion, and by the grace of God, once again, resurrected… And so, behold, to this day!

As we celebrate the Resurrection of Christ, let us remember, dear spiritual children, our brothers and our sisters in our martyred Kosovo and Metohija! Let us pray for them that the Lord gives them the strength that, through their endurance of every injustice and tribulation, they may work out their own and our salvation, that they may never lose faith in the ultimate victory of the Good, and that they may believe that the Lord, God of mercy and goodness, is always with them and with all who follow God's ways!

Likewise, brothers and sisters, we remember our brothers and our sisters in Montenegro who suffer great lawlessness and injustice. Lawless "laws " have abolished truth and justice in Montenegro. The once proud and admirable Montenegro, known for its valor and heroism, today seeks to take away from our Church what has been hers for centuries, what the entire Serbian people, with their bishops, clergy and monastics, have built and created. The sanctuaries of Montenegro, many of them older than Montenegro itself, are the sanctuaries of the people, and in them the Holy Liturgy is being sung and will continue to be sung throughout the centuries, by the prayers of Saint Basil of Ostrog, Saint Peter of Cetinje, the holy new martyrs who suffer at the unbrotherly hands of 'domestic' people who wage war against God, and through the prayers of all the holy people of God.

Let us remember today our martyred brethren in Syria, Iraq, and around the world, all those who suffer from human injustice and greed! One of the most beautiful and most important countries in the world – Syria – has been nearly destroyed by evil and violence. Let us pray today for all of them and for all suffering people that the Lord will deliver them out of the hands of unrighteous people!

Today we especially remember and wholeheartedly greet with, *Christ is risen,* our brothers and sisters in Ukraine, led by their Metropolitan Onufri, all metropolitans, archbishops and bishops, monastics and clergy, who are victims of the un-ecclesiastical, indiscriminate and self-serving actions of our time! Let us pray for those who are suffering and entrust them to the Risen Christ Himself to save them and deliver them from the hands of the lawless!

Dear brothers and sisters and dear spiritual children,

This year, we are arriving at and celebrating Pascha under difficult circumstances, in such distress as in which we have rarely welcomed and celebrated it in the past. We live in the days of a pandemic which has suddenly befallen humanity. The whole world is affected and threatened by a single virus. Will the proud and selfish man of today draw any conclusion from that fact? Or will he continue, without repentance and without love, to persevere in the suicidal project of creating his false worldly paradise in which there is no place for either God or for man as a godly, spiritual being? In the face of such adversity we must do everything we can to help ourselves and others understand and support the efforts and programs of the competent health, sanitation and government institutions which are undertaking efforts to protect us from infection. This may be difficult for us at the moment, but we must accept and support everything that is of general benefit and subordinate ourselves and our behavior. Above all, we pray to the Lord God to deliver us from this epidemic and similar dangers! Let us pray to God, let us participate regularly and actively in the Divine Liturgy, repent of our sins, and take care of our own health and that of others! This is an opportunity for us to think carefully about ourselves and the whole world. Look, one virus has shaken and brought to its knees the whole world and put the health and lives of millions of people at risk! “Calm down, O you prideful man!” – advised Dostoevsky in his time. His message is, we would say, more relevant today than it was when it was delivered.

In the joy of Christ’s Resurrection, we have all of you, dear spiritual children, you in our homeland and you scattered throughout the world, in our prayers and paternally greet you all with the all-joyous salutation:

Christ is Risen!

Given at the Serbian Patriarchate in Belgrade at Pascha 2020.
Your intercessors before the Resurrected Christ:

Archbishop of Pec,
Metropolitan of Belgrade-Karlovci and
Serbian Patriarch IRINEJ

Metropolitan of Montenegro and the Coastlands AMPHILOHIJE

Metropolitan of Zagreb and Ljubljana PORFIRIJE
Metropolitan of Dabro-Bosna CHRYSOSTOM

Bishop of Sabac LAVRENTIJE
Bishop of Srem VASILIJE
Bishop of Banja Luka JEFREM
Bishop of Budim LUKIJAN
Bishop of Banat NIKANOR
Bishop of New Gracanica-Midwestern America LONGIN
Bishop of Canada MITROPHAN
Bishop of Backa IRINEJ
Bishop of Great Britain and Scandinavia DOSITEJ
Bishop of Western Europe LUKA
Bishop of Zicha JUSTIN
Bishop of Vranje PAHOMIJE
Bishop of Sumadija JOVAN
Bishop of Branicevo IGNATIJE
Bishop of Zvornik-Tuzla FOTIJE
Bishop of Mileseva ATANASIJE
Bishop of Budimlje and Niksic JOANIKIJE
Bishop of Düsseldorf and Germany GRIGORIJE
Bishop of Ras and Prizren TEODOSIJE
Bishop of Western America MAXIM
Bishop of Gornji Karlovac GERASIM
Bishop of Eastern America IRINEJ
Bishop of Krusevac DAVID
Bishop of Slavonia JOVAN
Bishop of Austria and Switzerland ANDREJ
Bishop of Bihac-Petrovac SERGIJE
Bishop of Timok ILARION
Bishop of Nis ARSENIJE
Bishop of Australia and New Zealand Metropolitanate SILUAN
Bishop of Buenos Aires and South Central America KIRIL
Bishop of Dalmatia NIKODIM
Bishop of Osek-Polje and Baranja HERUVIM
Bishop of Zahumlje and Hercegovina DIMITRIJE

Vicar Bishop of Moravica ANTONIJE
Vicar Bishop of Remezijan STEFAN
Vicar Bishop of Mohac ISIHIJE
Vicar Bishop of Diokleia METODIJE

THE ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF OCHRID:
Archbishop of Ochrid and Metropolitan of Skoplje JOVAN
Bishop of Polog and Kumanovo JOAKIM
Bishop of Bregalnica MARKO

Vicar Bishop of Stobi DAVID

[Path of Orthodoxy translation]