21/04/2020

Paschal Message of Patriarch KIRILL of Moscow and All Russia



Paschal Message of Patriarch KIRILL of Moscow and All Russia to the Archpastors, Pastors, Deacons, Monastics and All the Faithful Children of the Russian Orthodox Church

Your Graces the archpastors, venerable fathers, all-honourable monks and nuns, dear brothers and sisters:

CHRIST IS RISEN!

By the grace of the All-Generous God, we have been vouchsafed to come to the radiant Paschal night and once again rejoice in the glorious Resurrection of Christ. From the depths of my heart I greet all of you, my beloved, with this great holiday and “feast of feasts.”

Almost two thousand years separate us from the event we recall today. And yet, every year with unchanging spiritual awe the Church celebrates the Resurrection of the Lord, tirelessly bearing witness to the exceptional nature of what occurred in the burial chamber by the walls of ancient Jerusalem.

The whole earthly path of the Son of God – from His miraculous Incarnation to His

Passion and terrible death on the cross – is the fulfillment of the Maker's promise, once given to our forefathers. God promised to send into the world the One who "bears our infirmities and carries our diseases" (Is. 53:4) and who will "save his people from their sins" (Mt. 1:21). Many times the Lord affirmed this promise through His prophets. He remained true to this vow even when the chosen people rejected the covenant and violated the Creator's will.

It is, then, in the Resurrection of Christ that God's love is revealed in its fullness, for death has finally been vanquished – the last boundary separating the human person from the true Fount of life. And although death continues to exist in the physical sense and takes away our human bodies, it no longer has the power to destroy our souls, that is to say, to deny us life everlasting in communion with the Maker. Death has been defeated and its sting has been removed (cf. 1 Cor. 15:55). The Lord has made "captivity itself a captive" (Eph. 4:8) and cast down Hades. "Nothing will be impossible with God" (Lk. 1:37), for truly "he is risen, as he said" (Mt. 28:6)!

In the current year the peoples of the earth have been enduring extraordinary ordeals. A baneful epidemic has spread throughout the whole world and has come to our lands too. The authorities have introduced restrictions in order to avert a further rapid spread of the epidemic. In some countries of the Moscow Patriarchate's pastoral responsibility public worship, including the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, has been suspended. However, we Orthodox Christians are not to be despondent or to despair in these difficult circumstances; even more so we should not surrender to panic. We are called upon to preserve our inner peace and recall the words of the Saviour spoken on the eve of his redemptive Passion: "In the world you face sorrow. But take courage; I have conquered the world!" (Jn. 16:33).

Pascha has become for all of humanity the transition from enslavement to sin to the freedom of the kingdom of heaven, “the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (Rm. 8:21). It is only thanks to the Saviour’s Resurrection that we obtain the true freedom of which the all-praised Apostle Paul speaks, calling upon us to “stand fast… in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us” (Gal 5.1). How many times have we read or heard these words? And now we have to think hard on whether we live today as though Christ’s Resurrection never happened. Are we not in danger of exchanging the riches of eternity for never-ending worldly concerns in once more being held captive to the vanity of this world, in surrendering to transient fears and forgetting the incorrupt spiritual treasures and true calling of the Christian to “serve the Lord in holiness and righteousness before him” (Lk. 1:75)?

And yet, “pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father” (Jm. 1:27) is this: to treat each other with love and patience, to help and support one another in tribulations, following the example of the Good Shepherd shown to us in the Gospel. No outward restrictions should ever tear apart our unity and take away from us the true spiritual freedom which we have obtained through coming to know our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ Who has conquered death and granted to us the chance to “be called the children of God; for that is what we are” (1 Jn. 3:1).

All the faithful children of the Church are of “one heart and one soul” (Acts 4:32), for apart we are but members, while together we are the Body of Christ and nothing in all creation “shall be able to separate us from the love of God” (Rm. 8:39). Therefore, let those who today are unable for objective reasons to come to church and pray know that they are in other people’s thoughts and prayers. Faith grants to us the strength to live and overcome with God’s help all sorts of infirmities and tribulations, including that which has become a part of our lives through the spread of the dangerous virus.

I ardently call upon all of you, my beloved, to strengthen your common prayer to the Lord so that we may, in spite of all hardships, remain partakers of the grace-filled liturgical life of the Church, so that the holy sacrament of Eucharist may be celebrated and the faithful may with boldness draw near to the Fount of Life which are the Holy Mysteries of Christ, and so that the sick may receive healing and the healthy be protected from the dangerous infection.

We believe that the Risen Saviour will never forsake us and that He will send down upon us the resolve and courage to stand steadfastly in faith and to make our salvific journey through our earthly life to life everlasting.

I wholeheartedly congratulate all of you, my beloved brothers and sisters, on the bright feast of the Holy Pascha and call upon you to always be the image of the Saviour’s true disciples in setting a good example to people around you and in proclaiming the mighty acts of the One “who has called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Pt. 2:9), so that all the days of our life we may through our deeds testify to the unsurpassed power and truth of the Paschal greeting:

TRULY CHRIST IS RISEN!

+KIRILL

PATRIARCH OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA

Pascha

2020