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Patriarchal Encyclical for Holy Pascha 2022



PATRIARCHAL ENCYCLICAL
FOR HOLY PASCHA

Prot. No. 169

+ 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 PLENITUDE OF THE CHURCH: MAY THE GRACE, PEACE AND MERCY
OF CHRIST RISEN IN GLORY BE WITH YOU ALL
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Having run the race of ascetic struggles during Holy and Great Lent and experienced with compunction the venerable Passion of the Lord, we are now filled with the eternal light of His splendid Resurrection, wherefore we praise and glorify His transcendent name, exclaiming the joyfully message to the whole world: "Christ is Risen!"

The Resurrection is the nucleus of the faith, devotion, culture and hope of Orthodox Christians. The life of the Church – in its divine-human, sacramental and liturgical, as well as spiritual, moral and pastoral expression and in the good testimony about the grace that has come in Christ and about the expected "common resurrection" – incarnates and reflects the annihilation of the power of death through the Cross and Resurrection of our Savior, along with the liberation of humankind from "enslavement to evil." This Resurrection is witnessed by the Saints and Martyrs of the faith, by the doctrine and ethos, but also the canonical structure and function of the Church, along with the sacred churches, monasteries and venerable sites, the godly zeal of the clergy and the unconditional commitment of those who have given their "having" and "being" to Christ as monastics, together with the orthodox phronema of the faithful and the eschatological impetus of our ecclesiastical way of life as a whole.

For us Orthodox, the celebration of Pascha is not a temporal escape from worldly reality and its contradictions, but a proclamation of our unwavering faith that the Redeemer of Adam's race, who trampled death by death, is the Master of history, the eternally "with us" and "for us" God of love. Pascha is the experience of the certainty that Christ is the Truth that sets us free; it is the foundation, existential axis and horizon of our life. "Apart from me you can do nothing" (Jn 15.5). No circumstance, "tribulation or distress, persecution or famine, nakedness, peril or sword" (Rm 8.35) can separate the faithful from the love of Christ. This steadfast conviction inspires and invigorates our creativity and desire to become in this world "collaborators of God" (1 Cor. 3.9). It guarantees that, in the face of every insurmountable hurdle and impasse, where no human solution is conceivable, there is always hope and perspective. "I can do all things in Him who strengthens me" (Phil. 4.13). In the risen Christ we know that evil, no matter what form it assumes, does not have the final word in the journey of humankind.

However, even as we are filled with gratitude and joy for this supreme value ascribed to the human being by the Lord of glory, we are disheartened before multifaceted violence, social injustice and infringement of human rights in our time. "The radiant message of the resurrection" and our cry "Christ is Risen!" today reverberate alongside the horrendous sound of weapons, the distressing cries of innocent victims of military aggression and the plight of refugees, among whom there are numerous innocent children. We saw with our own eyes all of these problems during our recent visit to Poland, where the vast majority of Ukrainian refugees has fled. We stand and suffer alongside the pious and courageous people of Ukraine that bear a heavy cross. We pray and strive for peace and justice as well

as for all those who are deprived of these. It is unimaginable for us Christians to remain silent before the obliteration of human dignity. Together with the victims of military conflict, the “greatest casualty” of war is humanity, which has not managed to eradicate war in the course of its long history. Not only does war not solve problems; it actually creates new and more complex problems. It sows division and hatred; it increases discord among peoples. We firmly believe that humankind is capable of living without war and violence.

The Church of Christ innately functions as an agent of peace. Not only does it pray “for the peace from above” and “the peace of the whole world,” but it underlines the importance of every human effort to establish peace. The principal characteristic of a Christian is “peacemaking.” Christ blesses the peacemakers, whose struggle is a tangible presence of God in the world and depicts the peace “that surpasses all understanding” (Phil. 4.7) in the “new creation,” the heavenly kingdom of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. As judiciously emphasized in the document of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, entitled For the Life of the World, the social ethos of the Orthodox Church, the Church “honors the martyrs for peace as witnesses to the power of love, to the goodness of creation in its first and final forms, and to the ideal of human conduct established by Christ during his earthly ministry” (§ 44).

Pascha is the feast of freedom, joy and peace. We solemnly praise the Resurrection of Christ through which we experience our own co-resurrection. And we faithfully worship the great mystery of Divine Economy and we share in “the feast that is common to all.” In this spirit, from the see of the Church of Constantinople, which eternally participates in the Cross and Resurrection of our Lord, we address to all of you, most honorable brother Hierarchs and beloved children, our wholehearted paschal greeting, invoking upon you the grace and mercy of Christ the God of all who put Hades to death and granted us eternal life.

At the Phanar, Holy Pascha 2020

+ Bartholomew of Constantinople

Your fervent supplicant to the Risen Lord[1]