PASCHAL MESSAGE of His Holiness KIRILL, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia

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of His Holiness KIRILL,

Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia

to the Archpastors, Pastors, Deacons, Monastics and All the Faithful Children of the Russian Orthodox Church

Beloved in the Lord archpastors, all-honourable presbyters and deacons, God-loving monks and nuns, dear brothers and sisters!

CHRIST IS RISEN!

From a heart filled with radiant joy in the Saviour who has risen from the tomb I greet you all with these life-affirming words and congratulate you on the “feast of feasts” – the Lord’s Passover.

Today we are called to a great banquet of faith, to a great triumph of the spirit. The Only-begotten Son of God, who has come into the world, endured suffering and death on the Cross, and at the word of the heavenly Father rose victoriously from the tomb! Jesus has risen and “death is swallowed up in victory” (1 Cor 15:54)! He has risen and the whole universe rejoices! The Lord has vanquished Hades and crushed the power of the devil. And all of this has been accomplished by the God who loves humankind, “who has predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself … in whom we have redemption through his blood and the forgiveness of sins” (1 Eph 1:4-5, 7).

Christ’s victory over death is not only a spiritual, but also a physical reality. The Lord Jesus truly rose bodily for the salvation of all people. With his resurrection death has lost its irreversible nature, and for those who believe in Christ it has become the rebirth into life everlasting, the door which opens up the way to heaven and the kingdom of God.

It is not fortuitous that the martyrs too welcomed all sorts of sufferings for Christ’s sake. And if before

even great righteous men mourned the dead as having perished forever, then after the resurrection of the Lord Jesus death no longer held any terror for them. In the remarkable words of St. Athanasius the Great, henceforth “all who believe in Christ trample down death as nothing. For they truly know that when they die they are not destroyed, but actually live, and become incorruptible through the resurrection” (Homily on the Incarnation of God the Word and his coming to us in the Flesh). The New Martyrs of the Church of Russia have shown to us a clear example in fearlessly accepting the crowns of martyrs during the time of persecution for the faith in the 20th century.

Today, when the world ever more resembles the foolish rich man in the Gospel parable (see: Lk 12:16-21), when comfort, success and a long life are proclaimed as practically the main values in human existence, we, the disciples and followers of the Saviour, along with the apostle Paul boldly testify: “For me to live is Christ” (Phil 1:21), and death is no longer the end of our existence. We speak and believe thus, for we know that God created the human soul for eternity.

How often do we, who are engulfed in the vanity and anxieties of everyday life, lack the spiritual insight to see the transforming power of the presence of God in our lives! Yet the time of Pascha is a completely special time. In these days the air itself is replete with incomparable Paschal joy, while God’s love and mercy are poured out in abundance upon every human being.

As we enter into the festivities of this wondrous and radiant holy day, we are called upon, not only in word but also in deed, to bear convincing witness to the great gift that people have received through the risen Lord Jesus. So let us then share with those around us the joyous news of the Gospel, let us bestow our love, care and attention upon our neighbours, let us do good to those who need our help and comfort. Only thus, with lips and hearts full of thanksgiving as we glorify the Saviour who has risen from the tomb, do we become heirs of the Paschal miracle that has now been accomplished and with boldness call ourselves the sons and daughters of the Most High God who has manifested to all of us his boundless love.

In sending you my heartfelt congratulations on the bright feast day of Holy Pascha, I again and again address you with the joyous greeting:

CHRIST IS RISEN!

/+KIRILL/

PATRIARCH OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA

Moscow

Pascha

2018

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