PASCHAL MESSAGE by His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia

Beloved in the Lord

Your Graces the archpastors,

all-honourable pastors and deacons,

God-loving monks and nuns,

dear brothers and sisters!

On 'this chosen and holy Day' when the world 'that is visible and invisible' (see: the Canon of Holy Pascha) glorifies the Prince of life and Victor over death, I send my heartfelt greetings to all of you through the Paschal exclamation:

CHRIST IS RISEN!

From year to year the good news of the Resurrection resounds victoriously, encouraging us to render praise to God and the Saviour, who has trampled down death by death and has made us co-participants in the life eternal which is to come.

As we celebrate this 'Feast of feasts and Triumph of triumphs,' it is with a special spiritual feeling that we recall the redemptive act of the Saviour of the world, his sufferings on the Cross and bright resurrection. Pascha is not some beautiful legend, not some theoretical theology and not a nod towards a popular custom established in the distant past. It is the essence and kernel of Christianity. It is the victory that God has granted to us.

From the time of the apostles and up to the present the Church has preached Christ's resurrection as the greatest miracle in the history of humanity. She speaks of this miracle not only as a fact of the Gospels, but - and what is especially important - as a moment of destiny for all those who have received the Paschal good news. This feast bears the most direct relationship to us, for Christ's resurrection, the Lord's redemption of the fallen world, is the greatest joy which the human person can experience. No matter how difficult our life, no matter what everyday troubles besiege us, no matter what grief and imperfections we have to endure from the world around us - all of this is nothing in comparison to the

spiritual joy, to the hope of eternal salvation that God gives us.

As St. Paul says, 'he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken our mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwells in us' (cf. Rom 8:11).

On the radiant day of Christ's resurrection the souls of millions of the faithful are replete with thanksgiving to the Creator, and our earthly life acquires true meaning. Christ's Passover is the greatest triumph of life, the triumph over death bringing love, peace and spiritual transformation.

In celebrating Pascha we each time open up a new period in our lives, for the risen Lord renews human nature, fortifies us in tribulations, and grants to us the strength to accomplish good deeds.

The Paschal message, which has transformed the whole course of world history, encourages us to be morally transformed, to be spiritually renewed, which is so essential for modern-day society. It reminds all people of the sources of Christianity, as well as of the coming eternal Kingdom where 'God may be all in all' (1 Cor 15:28).

During these radiant days of the Paschal feast we are called upon to share our joy with our relatives and those close to us, to show them active love and mercy. Such are the traditions sanctified over the centuries, and in following them we testify to our participation in Christ's heritage and belief that the Lord has truly risen.

Now, as before, the Russian Orthodox Church diligently carries out her saving mission, tirelessly proclaiming God's truth, affirming the importance of the Gospel commandments, calling for peace and harmony, serving the spiritual unity of nations living in the countries under the pastoral care of the Moscow Patriarchate.

Our special prayer today is for the peoples of Russia and Ukraine that peace will reign in the minds and hearts of our brothers and sisters by blood and in faith so that the ties that have been lost and co-operation which is so needed may be restored.

In proclaiming the love of God which surpasses all knowledge (cf. Eph 3:19), Christianity brings people together by overcoming national, cultural and state boundaries, for 'the light of Christ illumines all' (cf. Jn 1:9).

May the risen Lord grant that we may all with benefit for our souls continue our earthly pilgrimage in recalling our lofty Christian responsibility and vocation to create within ourselves and those around us a strong faith, sincere love and steadfast hope. May the joy of this feast day strengthen and inspire us to

accomplish good works, grant to us the courage and strength amidst the stormy waves of the sea of life to retain our endurance and calm, to withstand temptation and trials, to overcome, in the words of St. Sergius of Radonezh, 'the hateful divisions of this world.'

May the light of Christ's glory that has shone forth from the Life-bearing Tomb abide with us and illumine our hearts, extending to those who are close to us and those far removed from us, and upon all who are in need of our care and support.

In congratulating all of you on the great feast of Holy Pascha, I prayerfully wish for you generous spiritual gifts, physical strength and the gracious aid which is from above in the triumphant journeying with Christ. Amen.

+**KIRILL**

Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia

Moscow

Pascha

2014 AD

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