Paschal Message of His Holiness KIRILL Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia

Paschal Message 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 Your Graces the archpastors, all-honourable presbyters and deacons, God-loving monks and nuns, dear brothers and sisters!

In spiritually rejoicing on this great and glorious feast of the Resurrection from the dead of the Saviour of the world, in contemplating in my thoughts his emergence from the tomb, I address to you all the life-affirming exclamation which is replete with inner strength, unvanquished truth and joy:

CHRIST IS RISEN!

The radiant Paschal night reveals to humanity the fullness of the Divine love by which the pre-eternal Son of the heavenly Father has taken upon himself human nature, healed it from the sickness of sin and, in descending into the depths of Hades, has destroyed the bonds of death, granting to us the precious opportunity of uniting with our Creator and Provider.

In uniting with this all-protecting love of the Lord, we acquire an unconquerable weapon *'against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places'* (Eph 6:12). We overcome the fear caused by the limits of our human nature and acquire the ability to confront fearlessly all of today's challenges. For *'there is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear'* (1 Jn 4:18).

It is not fortuitous that the Gospel repeatedly conveys to us the words of the Lord which he spoke for the encouragement and strengthening of the spirit of his followers: 'Do not fear!' Fear for the future, the fear of dangers unknown, of imaginary or real threats, is a feeling familiar to many. Yet the Lord abides with

us if only we do not turn away from him. And in these days of glorifying his victory over death the Saviour addresses each one of us: *'Do not fear, only believe'* (Mt 5: 36).

May our behavior, in contradiction to the evil spirit of this age, become the visible affirmation of Eternal Truth. For, although we live today in conditions of social and religious freedom, the striving to live in accordance with Christian moral norms signifies, as before, a movement against the current. It reveals a refusal to accept those stereotypes of behavior and the position of the justification of sin which insistently and systematically make their way into peoples' lives through modern means of influencing the consciousness.

When we turn to the Lord we can leave behind the spiritual emptiness and egoism reigning in the world, see the light of the Resurrection and perceive it as a guiding sign on the way to the Heavenly City.

May communion with the one Eucharistic cup become for us a source of strength in this moving towards eternity. May the grace of the All-Holy Spirit, in granting to our souls an inviolable peace, steadfastness in the faith and growth in virtue, strengthen us all.

In communing with the Body and Blood of Christ, we, as Holy Scripture puts it, may become *'participants of the divine nature'* (2 Pet 1:4), we can change our natural condition. Through communion we are given the chance to be likened to him who for our sake *'emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on the cross'* (Phil 2:7-8).

Our moral and spiritual transformation is the main pledge and foundation for the transfiguration of the life of society, the nation and the country. It is impossible to change for the better the whole without perfecting its parts. The correct mental perception of people from all age, social and political groups determines the well-being of our homeland. Our vectors in life will shape the development of all the countries of historical Rus', our Church and, by extension, of all of God's creation, entrusted to us by the Creator to preserve and *'keep it'* (Gen 2:15).

I prayerfully wish you all, my dear ones, the abiding presence of joy in the risen Conqueror of Hades and abundant aid from above in your everyday labours.

TRULY CHRIST HAS RISEN!

Amen.

+KIRILL,

PATRIARCH OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA

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Pascha

2012

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