



THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

Department for External Church Relations

PASCHAL MESSAGE of His Holiness Patriarch KIRILL of Moscow and All Russia to the Archpastors, Pastors, Monastics and All Faithful Children of the Russian Orthodox Church

Dear and beloved in the Lord your graces the archpastors, the all-honourable presbytery and diaconate, God-loving monks and nuns, and all faithful children of the Church,

Christ is risen!

It is with this joyful exclamation that we now greet each other anew. Paschal rejoicing fills our hearts, for Christ's resurrection is the foundation of a life that has conquered death, sin and corruption. We are called to relive Pascha as the triumph of life not only on this day: every Sunday reveals to us the majesty of the Saviour's feat, liberating us from death and destroying the fetters of sin which separate man from God. Moreover, each minute of the true Christian is to be replete with Paschal joy.

'I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live' (John 11:25). Christ's resurrection has granted to us genuine freedom and filled man's existence with meaning and hope. The most important thing is that it has opened up the way to Life Eternal to every one who believes in Christ and who lives in the Church. Therefore there can be no cause for despair, despondency and fear for those who love Christ and follow him in all circumstances of their earthly path, for 'Christ is risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept' (1 Cor. 15:20).

The Paschal triumph of life embraces the whole world, all of divine creation, bringing it to life with grace. 'Christ is risen, and life reigneth,' says St. John Chrysostom in his Paschal homily. The divine gift of life, trampled upon and defiled by the falling away of the old Adam, is again revealed to us in its plenitude by Christ the new Adam.

Having communicated with the plenitude of this generous revelation of divine mercy, let us, my dear ones, value and preserve this gift. Where blood is shed and people suffer, where the image of God is

trampled upon in pursuit of greed, conflict and selfishness, let us come to the defence of this image by fulfilling our Christian vocation. May our knowledge of Christ's Truth be a firm foundation for bearing witness to the risen Christ before our neighbours and those afar so that they may find life eternal. May the Almighty Lord strengthen us in knowledge of God, in mutual love and in deeds of compassion and charity. Let us zealously endeavour to ensure that not only our individual lives but the life of all society be constructed according to God's commandments, for it is only in fulfilling them that we will be granted the fullness and harmony of being. It is precisely in this way that we can testify to our love for God, for as he said, 'If ye love me, keep my commandments' (John 14:15).

In these difficult times let us reveal our Christian vocation through deeds, let us support each other so that no one feels himself humiliated, abandoned, poor or denigrated. I desire that you all strive unceasingly towards heaven in all your thoughts, actions and intentions by recalling the words of the apostle: 'If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God' (Col. 3:1).

Full of joy in Christ who has trampled down death and torn asunder the bonds of hell, I would in particular like to appeal to our young people faced with the broad field of labours, hopes and achievements. Before you lies the task of creating through your own endeavours the future of our nation and our Church. May the powers, talents and abilities given to you by God be used for the good of your neighbours, for the fulfillment of your vocation and for the attaining of God's holy will.

My beloved! On this 'chosen and holy day' I embrace and greet each one of you, sharing my joy with all who confess the name of Christ and with each who is ready to accept into his heart the joy of the Paschal greeting:

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

+Kirill,

Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia

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