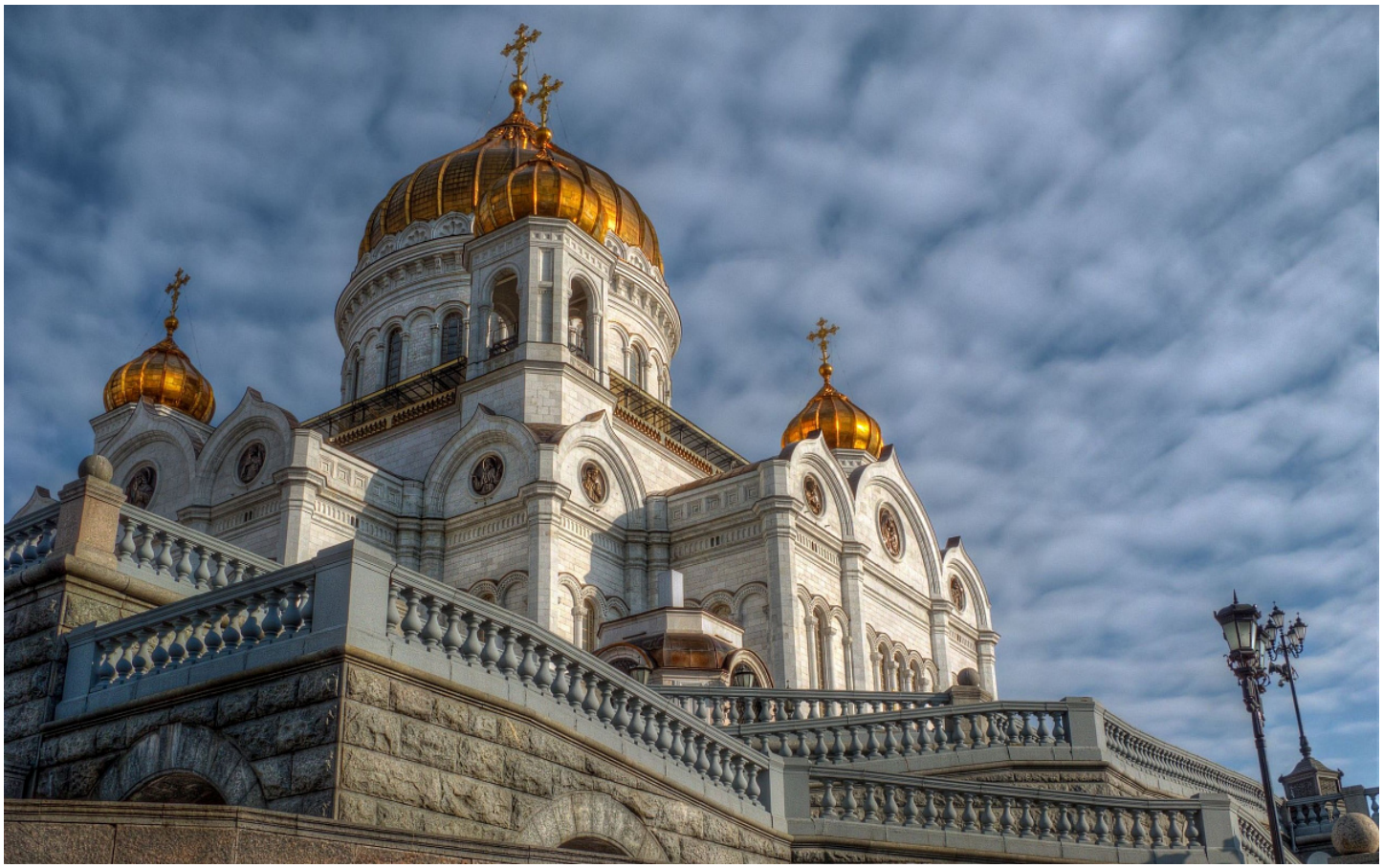
THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
Department for External Church Relations

Paschal Message of Patriarch KIRILL of Moscow and All Russia to the Archpastors, Pastors, Deacons, Monastics and All the Faithful Children of the Russian Orthodox Church



Your Graces the archpastors,

reverend pastors and deacons, all-honourable monks and nuns,

dear brothers and sisters:

On this *chosen and holy day*, full of Paschal joy and glorious light, the life-affirming glad tidings are being passed on from mouth to mouth, from heart to heart:

CHRIST IS RISEN!

In these words, we confess the unshakeable faith in Him, by Whose Cross we stood on Holy Friday and for Whom we mourned along with His disciples and myrrh-bearing women when praying before the Shroud. And this very day, together with the Angelic Host, revealing the unity of the earthly and the heavenly Church, we triumphantly proclaim: *Today salvation has come to the world; for Christ is risen as Almighty* (Paschal Canon, Irmos of Ode 4).

The Pascha of the Lord is the most striking testimony to God's wisdom and the boundless love of the Creator for humankind. The dawn of history, as we know, was darkened by the spiritual tragedy – through the fall of the progenitors the doors of Heaven were closed to people, and from that time onwards suffering and death have been the inevitable consequence of human sinfulness. Yet, having lost the communion with God the Source of life, people were not deprived of His mercy and love.

At the same time, as Nicholas Cabasilas, a 14th century saint, wrote, *the love of God was boundless, yet there was no sign to express it* (The Life in Christ, VI). Love manifests itself in doing good for one's neighbours and in the willingness to endure hardships, distress and even sufferings for their sake, and the Saviour shows it all. By His Incarnation He renews the human nature damaged by sin, and by His death on the Cross He delivers us from the power of evil. *Thus we have received life in Christ*, St. Ephrem the Syrian concludes, *We have eaten His Body in place of the fruit of the Tree…, the curse has been washed away by His innocent blood and in the hope of resurrection… we walk in the new life* (Commentary on the Diatessaron, 21).

The Resurrection of the Saviour opened to humanity the doors of the Heavenly Kingdom and filled our earthly life with the intransient meaning. The Lord *gave Himself to all those believing in Him as the model of virtue, and acquired incorruption so that all who are being saved may tread in His steps*, as St. Maximus the Confessor writes (The Ambigua, 42). To do it, we must here, on earth, learn to breathe the air of eternity, putting off *the old man with his deeds* (Col 3:9), living our life in accordance with the Gospel and participating in the sacraments of the Holy Church, which is the heiress of God's great promises.

Faith in the Resurrection of the Saviour quenches the flame of worldly tribulations and allows a person to rise above the mundane vanity, helping resist temptations of sin and overcome various fears. In response to the Divine love we are called to demonstrate *charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned* (1 Tim 1:5); in response to His loving kindness – show mercy to people around us; and in response to His care – strive to build the life of society in accord with the lofty ideals of the Gospel.

Going beyond national and state boundaries, the Paschal celebration spiritually unites millions of Christians living in different countries. This polyphonic earthly choir, in concert with all the bodiless Powers of Heaven, gives praise to the Lord Jesus Who *shed His blood for all and has redeemed the world with a life-bearing ransom* (Octoechos, Tone 6, Saturday Matins Stichera).

From year to year, from century to century, from millennium to millennium, this thanksgiving triumphantly resounds throughout the world – resounds despite all temptations, hardships and ordeals. And it does not stop today, when the world is suffering from the baneful pestilence.

At these trying times it is particularly important to support those diseased and infirm, those grieving over the loss of their relatives and friends, those who have lost their livelihood, those who cannot come to church. Let us do what we can to help the afflicted, let us not walk with indifference past the people in need of our concern, attention and care.

Just recently, because of the epidemiological measures, many of us could not attend divine services. The experience we have gained shows how important it is to value and take every opportunity to pray together and participate in the services, holy sacraments and, above all, the Divine Eucharist that unites us with Christ and with one another.

My dear, I heartily greet you with the great feast of Pascha and wish you good health and abundant mercies from Jesus the Giver of life. May the gracious Lord vouchsafe all of us to *more perfectly partake of Him in the unending Day of His Kingdom* and to joyfully proclaim:

CHRIST IS RISEN!

INDEED, CHRIST IS RISEN!

+KIRILL

PATRIARCH OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA

Pascha of Christ,

2021

The Paschal greeting is available in the following languages*:*

Arabic

Azerbaijani

Byelorussian

Cebuano

Estonian

French

German

Greek

Hungarian

Indonesian

Kazakh

Khmer

Korean

Kyrgyz

Latvian

Romanian

Serbian

Russian

Simplified Chinese

Tajik

Thai

Traditional Chinese

Turkman

Ukrainian

Uzbek

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