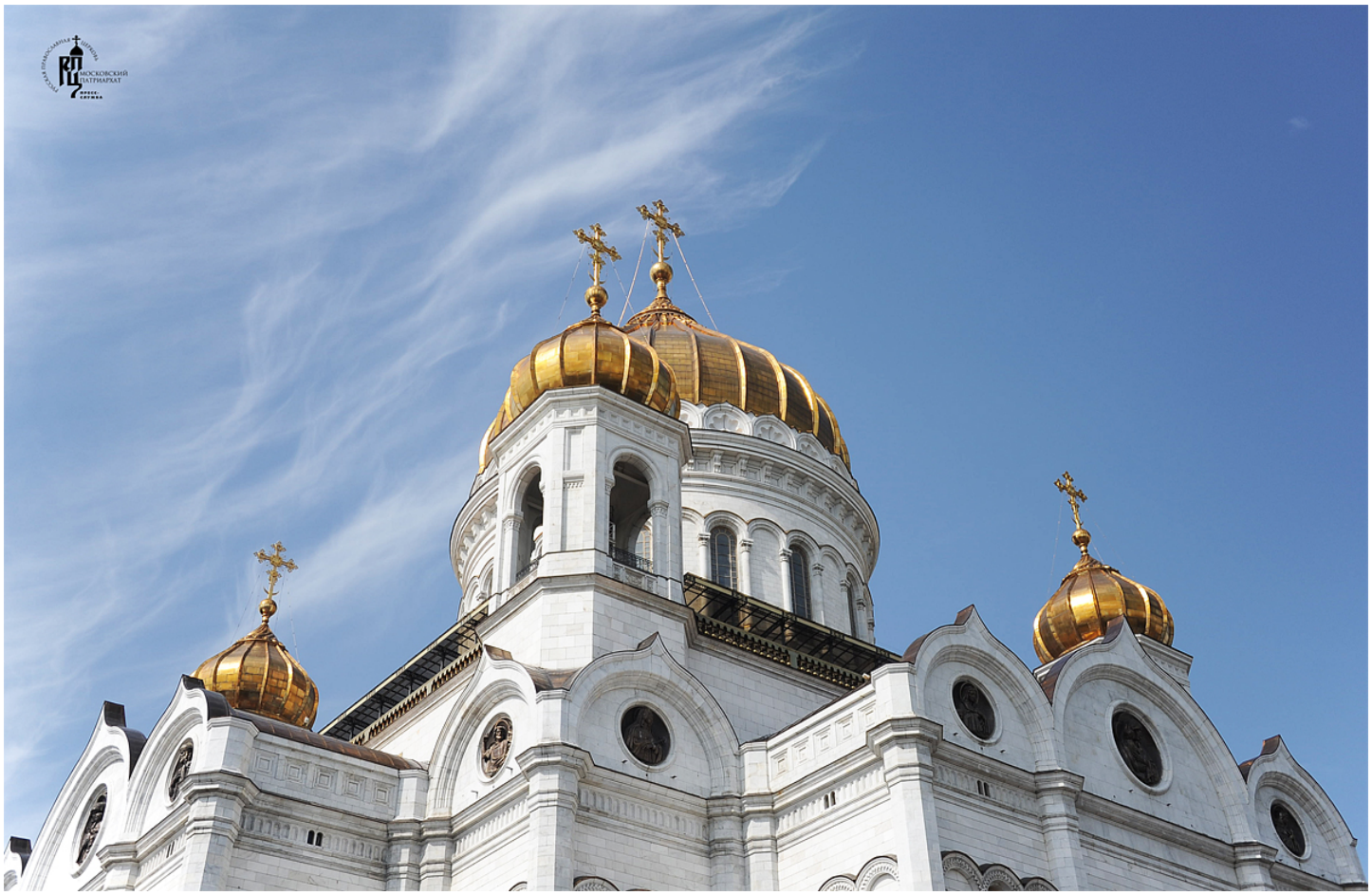
THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
Department for External Church Relations

Paschal Message from Patriarch KIRILL of Moscow and All Russia



Paschal Message by

His Holiness Patriarch KIRILL of Moscow and All Russia

to the archpastors, pastors, deacons, monks and nuns,

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,

On today's "feast of feasts and solemnity of solemnities", which, as Saint Gregory the Theologian proclaims, "is far exalted above all others – not only those which are merely human and are of the earth, but even those which are of Christ himself, and are celebrated in his honour – as the sun is above the stars" (Oration 45 on Holy Pascha), it is with great joy that I address you with the greeting that is both ancient and eternally new, which all are long accustomed to and yet which forever compels our hearts to soar aloft:

CHRIST IS RISEN!

These two life-affirming words contain so much power that the countenances of people shine with spiritual joy from them and the world that surrounds us is literally transfigured: "Now all things are filled with light: heaven, and earth, and the places under the earth. The seen and unseen world celebrates, for Christ who is eternal joy has risen" (Paschal Canon).

The Resurrection of the Saviour is not merely a historical event of which we know from Scripture. It is the cornerstone of our faith and is, as Saint Philaret of Moscow states, "that which is eternally new, the fountain of our thoughts, of our amazement, of thanksgiving and hope" (Homily for the day of Pascha).

Through his incarnation, passion and rising from the dead on the third day the Saviour renews human nature, delivers us from the power of sin and death, opens up to us the gates of the kingdom of heaven and shows us the way to oneness with the Maker. It is indeed in Christ that "God was reconciling the world to himself" (2 Cor. 5.19) so that we may become sons by adoption and are justified, that we may find life everlasting, for "there is no other name under heaven by which we must be saved other than

Jesus Christ, whom God raised from the dead" (Acts 4.10-12).

The Saviour's rising from the tomb transforms death into immortality, sadness into joy, condemnation into hope. On the cross and in the resurrection the God of infinite goodness and perfect love is revealed to us.

The awareness of this all-conquering love of God arouses within us a sense of thanksgiving towards the Maker and grants to us the strength to overcome the times when our hearts endure the greatest affliction and arduous circumstances, it elevates us above the vanity of everyday life, it helps us to correct our former errors and casts down the despondency which hinders us in living a full life and growing spiritually.

People often succumb to the deceptive notion that evil reigns and triumphs, while good passes by unnoticed and is weak. Our mind hesitates in believing in the power of redemption which Christ has accomplished when it sees around us the death of those closest to us, when it hears of the eternal torments for sinners in the Gospel and contemplates "the world which lies under the power of the evil one" (1 John 5.19). Yet for thousands of years the Church of God has borne convincing witness that the Saviour has overcome sin and "annihilated death and despoiled Hades" (Saint John Chrysostom. Paschal Catechetical Homily). Christ has cast aside the inevitability of death and the universality of evil, and we look upon their defeat through the eyes of faith from the age to come, from the lofty heights of Pascha.

The Lord's rising from the tomb reminds us not only of the most important event of the past, but also testifies to the coming resurrection of all, "for since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died" (1 Thess. 4.14). It is, then, vital that we observe God's commandments, accomplish deeds of love and mercy, participate in the sacramental life of the Church in order to partake in Christ's victory and remain faithful to him to the end, recalling the words of Scripture: "For you need endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised" (Heb. 10.36).

For this reason, as the apostle exhorts us, dear brothers and sisters: “Do not, therefore, abandon that confidence of yours; it brings a great reward” (Heb. 10.35). And may the feast of the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus be an unchanging reminder of these steadfast divine promises which grant to us hope and strength in even the most difficult of circumstances. May this solemnity inspire us all to live in faith and love, knowing that neither death, nor suffering, nor evil can ever overcome us if we are with Christ and in Christ, who has vanquished sin, death and all falsehood.

Let us, then, “keep the feast of the Lord’s Passover by living a life of purity and virtue and by accomplishing good deeds” (Saint Athanasius the Great. 10th Paschal Letter), so that in being transformed into a new person in Christ we may “serve a living and true God, and wait for his son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead – Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath that is coming” (1 Thess. 1.9-10). Amen.

+KIRILL

PATRIARCH OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA

Pascha

2024

Patriarchal message is also available in other languages:

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Arabic

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Cebuano

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