



PASCHAL EPISTLE

Of the Episcopate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada

**To the Reverend Priesthood, the Diaconate in Christ, and all faithful Children of
the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada**

*We celebrate the death of death...and the beginning of another,
different eternal life... (7th song of the Paschal Canon).*

Reverend Fathers, Dear Brothers and Sisters!

Christ is Risen!

On this joyous day, when not only people rejoice and are glad, but even nature itself as it were awakens from sleep and is ready to arise in all its majesty and beauty, our spiritual thoughts turn again and again to the Resurrection.

“Rejoice” (MT. 28,9). This greeting was the first uttered by Jesus Christ after His Resurrection. It was deeply significant and consoling not only for the myrrh-bearing women, to whom it was first addressed, not only for the apostles, but for all Christians who today are solemnly celebrating Christ’s Resurrection.

For there is not a greater holiday in Christ’s Church, nor in the world a greater joy than that of the joy of the Risen Lord.

To this joy the heavens which are glad and the earth which rejoices summon us. Holy Church in her joy today embraces the whole world-both visible and invisible: "For Christ is Risen - joy eternal"!

This year Ukraine is celebrating Christ's Resurrection in tears and suffering. How can we Ukrainians in Canada be joyous with paschal gladness when sorrow has spread over all Ukraine and has touched the hearts of countless people? Can we be joyous in such circumstances? We not only can but we must be!

The Resurrection reminds us that our suffering is temporary. "Don't cry Mary, My Mother"- the Lord said to the Holy Mother of God- "for soon you will indeed be glad". Thus, we also may say: Don't cry, Ukraine, for soon you shall overcome your enemy and will rejoice.

The Resurrection gives us faith which is stronger because of these sufferings. And this faith gives sense to earthly life. This faith enriches our spiritual life and points the way to the Kingdom of Heaven. Faith is the strength and support of our whole life. In sin, faith gives forgiveness to those who repent; in suffering, it brings consolation; in complicated situations of life, it grants patience. Faith warms our hearts and supports us on the road of life. And there is no grief which would not be lightened by our Risen Lord.

The Resurrection of Christ urges us to struggle with sin. It calls us to moral purity and holiness, it teaches us to see in people the image and likeness of God. It justifies our struggle with falsehood. It inspires us to labour and to a devout life.

The Resurrection gives us the strength to conquer our sufferings, because the joy of Christ's Resurrection for all Christians is the source of light, courage and strength. Before His Ascension to Heaven, the Lord said "Lo, I am with you in all days to the end of the age" (Mt 28,20). The Resurrection testifies that the Lord, truly abides in Holy Church and in each of us. The Resurrection fills everyone who glorifies Christ Jesus with a feeling of such joy as no human word can express.

Christ's Resurrection is our own resurrection. If we desire our heart to always burn with faith in our Resurrected Lord, if we wish with all our being to remain always in the paschal joy, let us strengthen our will in the constant effort to do good.

Today we celebrate the death of death and the beginning of a new life. Look at our Ukrainian soldiers: they do not fear death at all. Before our eyes they give their lives for their native land and are not afraid. Why? Because Our Lord, Jesus Christ has conquered death. A lack of fear of death is proof that death is overcome. Jesus Christ's triumph over death is the victory of good over evil. When we see evil victorious, we should be certain that this victory is temporary. The time will come when evil will be conquered by good.

Christ's Resurrection gives a new direction to the life of a person. It makes our life on earth understandable and purposeful. In the future there will be, not death, not perdition, not destruction, but there will be a different existence "the beginning of a new eternal life".

St. Gregory the Theologian teaches us “In celebrating the renewal of our life, let us also renew ourselves spiritually”.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ!

In this glorious day of Christ’s Resurrection, we also share with you this paschal joy. From our deepest heart we wish that our holiday greeting “Christ is Risen” will strengthen us in faith, remove the weariness of the war, give the joy of hope in the total victory over the enemy, and in a bright future for our ancestral motherland Ukraine.

With this great Christian holiday we greet all Ukrainians in Canada and all Ukrainians on all continents of the world. Especially we greet and pray for the Ukrainian government and our soldiers-protectors who in difficult circumstances defend the freedom and independence of their country, Ukraine at the cost of their lives.

We fervently pray that the Risen Christ will strengthen our mental and physical powers. May nothing dim our paschal joy.

May the light of Christ’s Resurrection grant us blessed strength to endure and overcome all difficulties that have been put in our path, so that we may obtain peace and prosperity in our earthly life and become participants in eternal life, always rejoicing and glorifying our Saviour, Lord Jesus Christ, who by His Crucifixion and Resurrection vanquished our sin and death.

May the blessing of our Resurrected Saviour Christ be with you all.

Truly Christ is Risen!

With Archpastoral Blessing,

+Ilarion, Archbishop of Winnipeg and Metropolitan of Canada

+Andriy, Bishop of Toronto