

PASCHAL EPISTLE

**of Patriarch FILARET
of Kyiv and All Rus-Ukraine**

to Reverend Archpastors, God-loving Pastors,
Honorable Monastics and All Faithful Children
of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church - Kyiv Patriarchate

Dear brothers and sisters!

CHRIST IS RISEN!

“Rejoice!” (Mat. 28, 9). This greeting was the first that Jesus Christ said after His Resurrection. It is deeply significant and consolatory not only for the women myrrh-bearers, to whom it was first addressed, not only for the apostles, but for all Christians who now solemnly celebrate the Resurrection of Christ.

Why does the Resurrection of Christ fill believers with vivid excitement and elevated spiritual joy? Before Christ’s Resurrection a major part of humanity had no living faith and hope for the resurrection of the dead. In paganism even the greatest scholars and elders had a very unclear and uncertain hope for life after death. The Jewish people had faith in resurrection, and the forefathers (Job 19, 25) and the prophets (Isaiah 26, 19; Ezekiel 37, 1–10;) found consolation in it; however, being based on the expectation of the promised Savior, who was to destroy death. This faith was still simply a hope, lacking irresistible proof. In addition, the awareness of one's own sinfulness dismayed man and weakened in him the hope of resurrection and blissful eternal life.

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ, who conquered death, gives us firm hope for our future resurrection. Apostle Paul says that our resurrection becomes possible due to the Resurrection of Christ: if Christ is risen, we are to rise, all people, no matter whether we believe or not in general resurrection of the dead. It depends not on man but on God.

As through the physical forbearer of mankind Adam, who committed sin, all

people, linked with him through common bodily origination, were submitted to the law of death. The same way in the spiritual forefather Jesus Christ all people, spiritually reborn by Him and united with Him in faith, live and will rise (1 Corinthians 15, 20–22; 47–48). What happened to Adam passed to all mankind. What happened to Jesus Christ in due time will pass down to the whole of humanity. Apostle Paul witnesses clearly and confidently: “For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15, 22). We die because we are cognate to Adam dead, and we will rise because through the baptism we are allied to the Christ Resurrected.

Dear brothers and sisters! We are not to worry about the question whether we will resurrect or not. If God said all people will rise – so they will rise. Our Savior Jesus Christ promised firmly: “because I live, you will live also” (John 14, 19). All people will rise from the dust of the ground and reunite with their souls for the new painless, easeful and endless life in Christ and with Christ. But apart from the blissful eternal life the everlasting torment exists. The Lord has clearly said that the sinners will go away into eternal punishment.

The majority of people, living on the earth, do not think of eternal life. They devote themselves to the temporary and the earthly life, forgetting their eternal destination. But Christians, being such not only in name, but by their lives, thirst for eternal life with their heart and nature, and with their mind they realize the power of the Resurrection of Christ. Amid the changing human life the glorious resurrection of Christ brings consolation and joy for every Christian soul.

By the very example of the resurrection of Christ, believers are already persuaded that with departure of our bodies to the places of common rest everything does not come to an end. Death is extremely hard and fearful for man, because it interrupts the best feelings and thoughts, and brings to an end all the work and concern, everything man thrives on. The resurrection of Christ gives us hope that death does not end the life of the human spirit; it transfers our souls into the life that has no end.

We all know how bitter for man, his unavoidable earthly sufferings and diseases may be. And no matter how the human benefit grows, people would not cease dying on earth. Isn't the loss of our dear ones grief for all of us? In whatever abundance people live on earth, they will always follow their

beloved ones to the grave with tears.

The resurrection of Christ has given us a faith stronger than these sufferings. It endues us with the power to overcome them, since the joy of Resurrection of Christ is a source of light, courage and strength for all Christians.

May no one think that only the men of holiness, ascetics, or hermits are worthy of this joy of Christ Resurrected. This joy is granted to us, weak and sinful children of the Heavenly Father. The Holy Hierarch John Chrysostom in his Paschal homily says: “Let no one mourn their transgressions, for pardon has dawned from the grave”.

On these Paschal days I heartily greet you, reverend archpastors, God-loving pastors, honorable monastics, beloved brothers and sisters, on the feast of the radiant Resurrection of Christ! I send Paschal greetings to the President of Ukraine, the Ukrainian Government, and the armed forces of our state, all the Christians of Ukraine and to the entire Ukrainian nation. I offer my heartfelt congratulations to all the Ukrainian people in all the countries of the world, on all the continents. Celebrating Holy Pascha, let us keep in our minds and hearts the Paschal joy of resurrection from the dead. The Holy Church teaches us to live in peace and love, in all piety and purity, to serve our neighbor, the Ukrainian people and the Ukrainian nation, in order that on the day of our resurrection we prove ourselves worthy of the eternal joy with Our Resurrected Lord and Savior, to Whom belong all glory and honor and worship for ages and ages. Amen.

Truly Christ is Risen!

+FILARET

Patriarch of Kyiv and All Rus-Ukraine

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