

**Paschal Message of Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia
to the archpastors, pastors, deacons, monastics and all faithful children
of the Russian Orthodox Church**

Eminent fellow archpastors, reverend pastors and deacons, all-honourable monks and nuns, dear brothers and sisters,

CHRIST IS RISEN!

Addressing you with these life-asserting words, I extend to all of you my heartfelt greetings on the great and world-saving feast of Pascha. On this *chosen and holy day* so overwhelming is our spiritual joy and profound gratitude to God and so distinct is the feeling of the might and depth of the Creator's love for human beings that, when trying to express our emotions, we can hardly find other words than those of the myrrh-bearing women who ran to the apostles to tell them about the miraculous event – that they had seen the Lord.

One can only imagine how hard it was for the Saviour's disciples to believe in the reality of His Resurrection! It was not long ago that they had seen their beloved Teacher being tortured and crucified. Still fresh in their minds were the memories of how His dead and lifeless Body had been laid in the tomb, with a heavy stone rolled to its door. And now sorrow gives place to the firmness of faith and the triumph of life, and tears of affliction turn into tears of joy.

What a marvellous change! What a great sign of God's might! The tomb is open and empty. The burial shroud is thrown aside, and the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head is rolled up in a place by itself. Indeed, the Lord is risen and tells His disciples to place their fingers in the deep marks of the spear and nails, so that they finally may cast away even the slightest doubts *that it is He Himself* (cf. Lk. 24:39).

Experiencing the real communion with the Risen Christ and the unfading Paschal joy inspired and lent wings to the apostles who went to the ends of the earth to preach the forgiveness of sins and salvation which we received through the Lord Jesus risen from the tomb. Unafraid of adversities and severe persecutions, suffering hardships and tribulations, the apostles tirelessly and bravely bore witness to Christ the Vanquisher of death.

God fulfilled the promise He had given to people in ancient times: *I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death* (Hos. 13:14). And in the light of Easter morning we rejoice with St. Paul that *death is swallowed up in victory* (1 Cor. 15:54)! From now on, nothing *shall be able to separate us from the love of God* (Rom. 8:39), for the deadly effect of sin is brought to naught by the power of the Risen Lord. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ, *the firstborn from the dead* (Col. 1:18), reveals to us the true riches of God's grace – the radiance of eternal life with God and in God, when, according to the prophetic words of the Apostle, *God may be all in all* (1 Cor. 15:28).

For two thousand years now, the Church has been living in the unfading joy of the Resurrection, striving to make *every man that cometh into the world* (Jn. 1:9) a partaker of this joy. In the light of Pascha everything is different: we are not afraid of any mundane sorrows, afflictions and worldly troubles, and even difficult circumstances of these troubled times do not seem so important in the perspective of eternity granted unto us.

St. Ephraim the Syrian had a remarkable thought that during the creation the Lord had put into the depths of man the entire Heavenly Kingdom which only waits for us to discover it like a precious pearl. *The Kingdom is written in the soul and placed therein as a dowry, in order that, when the Heir of the Kingdom comes, He may take it with Him into the bridal chamber* (Commentary on “Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth...”). And this Heir – Christ – did come and rise from the dead, saving people from sins and giving us *power to become the sons of God* (Jn. 1:12), that we may walk before the Lord in holiness and truth, live in chastity, worthy to be called Christians, and be *the salt of the earth,.. the light of the world* (Mt. 5:13-14).

To bear witness to the Risen Saviour, we do not have to go somewhere far, like the apostles did, who spread the marvellous Paschal light all over the world. Many people around us are in need of a living model of Christian *faith working through love* (Gal. 5:6). God does not demand of us some heroic deeds that are beyond our strength. He just asks us to show love to one another, to remember that by doing so we also show love to Him. A kind smile, attention and sympathy to those who are near, as well as timely words of consolation and support can become our most important deeds for the sake of our Lord.

Greeting all of you on the feast of Pascha, I invoke upon you the blessing of the Risen Christ and wish you, my dears, the inexhaustible radiant Easter joy that strengthens us in faith, hope and love. God willing, may this light never fade in our hearts, always shining in the world (cf. Mt. 5:14). And may we, illumined by the word of God, by reading the Gospel, and partaking of the Divine grace in the Sacraments of the Church, grow steadily in the knowledge of the Lord and in fulfilling His commandments, so that people, *seeing our good works, glorify our Father which is in heaven* (cf. Mt. 5:16) and join us in joyfully proclaiming that

CHRIST IS RISEN INDEED!

+KIRILL

PATRIARCH OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA