



May 5, 2024
05/001

To the Clergy, Monastics, and Faithful of the Orthodox Church in America,

My Beloved Children in the Lord,



**CHRIST IS RISEN!
INDEED HE IS RISEN!**

Now all is filled with light: heaven and earth and the lower regions. Let all creation celebrate the rising of Christ: in him we are established. (St. John of Damascus, Paschal Canon, Ode Three)

Today we greet the most radiant feast of feasts, the king and lord of days, the Pascha of Christ our true God. Standing in the light of the Resurrection, we glimpse the true and unfading joy of the life to come.

To be sure, even on this chosen and holy day of light-bearing festival, my own heart remains heavy as I look out upon the world and behold wars and terrorism, unjust imprisonment and persecution, civil strife and political divisions. Indeed, “the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of iniquity” (Ps. 73:20). The world and its troubles present a threefold temptation to Christians who behold this multitude of “dark places”: we are tempted to despair; we are tempted to indifference; and we are tempted to conform and subordinate our holy Orthodox Christian faith to some worldly political program or ideology.

However, with his Pascha, Christ offers us a different response: a hope beyond this world, yet already present in this world. As we sing in the Paschal Canon of St. John of Damascus, everything is filled with the light of the Resurrection, even the lower regions. Life has burst forth from the grave; a light has shone in darkness (Jn. 1:5).

We dwell in a world of real trouble, real sorrow, real pain. The Lord came down into this world and became a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief, and he felt pain in his heart—on the night in which he was given up, his soul was “exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death”—and pain in his flesh (Is. 53:3;

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Mt. 26:38). But out of pain, the Lord has brought forth healing; out of sorrow, he has wrought an incorruptible source of joy. He died, but now he lives forever, and he offers us the same hope: eternal life.

And the eternal life that he offers is not just an extension of life in this world, with its ups and downs, sorrows and joys, sins and foibles and accidents. Rather he offers us abundant life, true life, by restoring our communion with God, who is the Source of life.

This true and incorruptible life, a life of constant trust and love and joy, is not only available in the world to come. Whenever we believe in Christ and his Resurrection and accept the joy of his Pascha, we are already, through faith and hope, getting a foretaste of that life—a life without fear of suffering or death, that sees sorrow as a source of joy, since even in sorrow, Christ, the Man of Sorrows, is there, ready to draw near to us in a union of love.

It is because of this that the holy Psalmist could write: “If I go up into heaven, thou art there; if I go down into hell, thou art present. If I take up my wings at dawn and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand guide me, and thy right hand shall hold me” (Ps. 138:8–10).

Wherever we are, whatever troubles we experience in our lives, whatever troubles we behold in this world, Christ is there with us, suffering with us in our suffering and offering us the hope of the unfailing happiness of his Pascha, inviting us to be in the world and not of the world, storing up all our hope and all the treasure of our hearts with him, in the kingdom that has no end, where neither moth nor rust can destroy and where no thief can break in and steal (Mt. 6:20).

May he who rose from the dead on the third day, kindling the light of hope for all the world, always shine upon our hearts with Paschal light, filling us with a joy-making desire for the good things to come and changing all our troubles and cares into opportunities to hope and trust.

To him, the Risen Lord, be all glory and adoration, together with his Father and his All-holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages!

Yours in the Risen Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tikhon', written in a cursive style.

+Tikhon
Archbishop of Washington
Metropolitan of All America and Canada

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