



UKRAINIAN GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH
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EASTER PASTORAL LETTER
OF HIS BEATITUDE SVIATOSLAV

Most Reverend Archbishops and Bishops,
Very Reverend and Reverend Fathers,
Venerable Brothers and Sisters in Monastic and Religious Life,
Dearly Beloved Laity in Christ of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church

*The One who delivered the three youths from the furnace,
Having become man has suffered as a mortal,
And with suffering clothed mortality in the splendour of incorruption,
The only blessed God of our fathers, most worthy of praise.*

Ode 7, Paschal Canon

Christ is risen!

Beloved in Christ!

The Pascha of Christ is the feast of transformation—of humankind and the universe, of sorrow into joy; the feast of victory—of good over evil, life over death. Early in the morning the myrrh-bearing women hurry to the tomb with tears to anoint the body of the crucified and buried Saviour. But instead of their lifeless Teacher, they meet a bright angel who announces to them the risen and living Christ. They come in sadness to anoint the Buried One with myrrh, and depart anointed with the oil of gladness: “Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen!” (Luke 24:5-6). The One whom they saw yesterday among the dead, today the angel commands them to seek among the living in the resurrection! Tears of sorrow and myrrh for the deceased are suddenly transformed into tears of joy and anointing for the proclamation of the greatest Good News in human history: He is risen!

The wondrous mystery that enveloped the myrrh-bearing women becomes a reality for each of us. Today we meet the risen Lord, who triumphantly emerges from the tomb and leads out of the tombs all those who have fallen asleep since time immemorial. Christ is risen in a human body, and every human being is resurrected with Him. The empty tomb becomes a place where our hearts are filled with inexpressible joy, for now the risen Lord leads us with Him into the joy of eternal life in God.

The One who delivered the three youths from the furnace, having become man has suffered as a mortal...

That Sunday morning, the myrrh-bearing women and all the disciples who, at their call, ran to the empty tomb of the Saviour, still carried in their hearts the horror and despair of two days earlier, when they saw Christ despised, tortured, and dead on the cross. How painful that Saturday after the crucifixion must have been for them—a day of fear, confusion, doubts, lost hope in the Teacher—a day when there was not a single sign or word from God. However, the very next morning, the luminous herald of the Resurrection, as if piercing the living, spiritual experience of humanity with the gaze of eternity, says to all Christ's disciples: "He is not here!"

The hymns with which the Church today welcomes the Saviour who triumphantly emerges from the tomb, show us that, in celebrating Pascha, we must not look only to the past. And we, who have survived more than three years of full-scale war in Ukraine, are called by that same angel to seek and see the presence of Jesus in His resurrection in the place where He is—in our paschal "today."

The Paschal Mystery of the suffering, death, and resurrection of the Lord reveals the deepest meaning of the spiritual experience that our people are living today. Helping us to see the suffering and risen Jesus among us, Melito of Sardis, as if summing up the Easter experience of persecuted Christians of the 2nd century in Asia Minor, says: "[Christ] was present in many so as to endure many things. In Abel he was slain; in Isaac bound; in Jacob a stranger; in Joseph sold... who became human in a virgin, who was hanged on the tree, who was buried in the earth, who was resurrected from among the dead, and who raised mankind up out of the grave below to the heights of heaven" (*Paschal Homily*, 65-67). This is why we sing today that our Saviour is "the one who delivered the youths from the furnace, becoming man, suffering like a mortal."

The same Lord who once descended into the flames of the Babylonian furnace to save those three youths who remained true to the faith of their fathers, refusing the godless command of the tormentor, takes upon Himself all the unjust suffering and persecution of biblical and human history. He is the one who suffers today in the body of Ukraine! It is He who is being killed in our girls and boys at the front. It is He who continues to be tortured in our prisoners. It is He who is being kidnapped in children sold into Russian slavery. It is He who is wounded in our heroes and who cries with the eyes of our mothers, children and orphans who have lost their sons, husbands and fathers. It is He who is being victimized and humiliated in different countries of Europe and the world in the person of our emigrants and refugees seeking to protect their children from war and caring about the future of our people. It is He, our Saviour, who is not only with us today, but also in us. He shares our pain and our suffering, because He sees us, knows us, and feels us in Himself, and suffers our wounds in His own body. Therefore, we, Ukrainians, can now say with the Apostle Paul that with our sufferings in our flesh we are "filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the Church" (Col. 1:24). That is why the Church of Christ always stands with the suffering because the Lord Himself dwells in them.

He who, having become man, suffers as a mortal, and bears our present wounds on His resurrected body!

And with suffering clothed mortality in the splendour of incorruption...

On this bright day of Christ's Resurrection, we clearly see that our Saviour not only suffers in the body and wounds of Ukraine but also is risen in us! It is He who comes out of death without experiencing corruption, victoriously breaking chains without breaking the seals of the tomb. It is He who adorns what is mortal, the very suffering of each of us, with the splendour and power of immortality and incorruption. Today, especially in this Paschal time of our Church and our people, we know from our own Christian experience, acquired amidst the horrors of war, that the life and resurrection of Jesus Christ pulsates in our veins. In celebrating Easter, through our sufferings in the Lord we are clothed with the splendour of incorruption.

This pulsation of the power of the Risen One in the body of our Church, the experience and awareness that in our mortal body we are already beginning to be partakers of His divine life today is the source of our Christian hope. Celebrating Easter, we wish to bear witness to the Resurrection of Christ and say to the whole world: "Christ is risen – truly He is risen!" On this great feast, we strive to bear witness to the power of hope for Ukraine, shining it on the whole world. Ukraine is now the epicentre of global changes. That is why people all over the world are waiting with such trepidation for the testimony of hope from Ukraine. We already have this hope; we draw it from the risen Saviour and share it with all humanity.

Today in Ukraine, the hope that is found in the splendour of incorruption which adorns us all through suffering, has many bright faces. It can be seen and encountered among our people. Hope shines in the faces of the defenders of Ukraine, who for the eleventh year in a row have shown that the Russian invader, who is numerically larger than us, can and must be stopped. Hope shines in the faces of doctors and rescuers who, after each missile attack, tirelessly save the lives of the elderly, adults, and children. Hope shines in the faces of loving parents, mentors and teachers who, amidst the horrors of war, often at risk to their own lives, raise children, teach them faith in God and all that is good, just, and eternal. Hope shines in the faces of young Ukrainians, on whose shoulders has fallen the greatest cross – the burden of wartime hardships – and who, despite everything, do not stop loving and dreaming, creating families and giving birth to children, conquering the heights of knowledge and sacrificing the most precious things for their country's liberty, including their own lives and health.

In this jubilee year declared by Pope Francis, who invites us to become pilgrims of hope, let us boldly share with the whole world our faith in the risen Saviour! Let us not be afraid to speak the truth about our struggle, about the peace and justice for which we strive and which we build every day! Let us not hesitate to confront falsehood, because violence and death constantly seek justification by resorting to slander and lies! In response to the darkness spread by the enemy of this world, let us shine the light of hope among a confused

and frightened humanity. The Apostle to the Gentiles encourages us to do this: "...We rejoice in hope of the glory of God. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Rom. 5:2-5).

The only blessed God of our fathers, most worthy of praise.

On this joyful and bright day, we bless and glorify our Creator and Saviour, as our predecessors-ancestors in faith did from generation to generation. We lift up a prayer of thanksgiving to the Lord our God, crucified and resurrected for our salvation. We thank Him for the gift of faith, hope, and love that He constantly puts in our hearts; we thank Him even for the trials that He sends us so that we can show His love and kindness to those who suffer.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ! Allow me to also thank you from the bottom of my heart and greet you on the feast of victory – of good over evil, light over darkness, hope over despair, truth over deceit. I know that each one of you, wherever you may be, contributes to this victory – both with small and great deeds. Our enemy seeks to destroy everything he cannot conquer; he strives to exterminate those he cannot subjugate and enslave. Therefore, each of his deadly missiles and each drone is only a sign of his weakness and inevitable defeat. For in the risen Christ, we are invincible!

Today I share a Paschal word of hope with all who have suffered physically, materially, and morally from this war – Ukrainian soldiers and civilians. With the Resurrection of Christ, I greet our hero-fighters, who bravely stare into the face of death, lovingly protecting those who stand behind their backs. I assure you of my unceasing prayer for you and your families. I greet our wounded in battle, whose sacrifice is most precious to us. I accompany your physical and spiritual healing with prayer. I greet those who are in enemy captivity or live in occupied territories. Be assured that we do not forget you, because you are always dear and close to us. I greet Ukrainians who have a husband or wife, son or daughter, brother or sister, father or mother fighting at the front. I embrace those who over the past year have lost relatives or loved ones, those missing in action. I share your pain and your anxiety, and in prayer I entrust your loss to the boundless and life-giving mercy of God. I greet those who are fighting for victory by ensuring the vitality and critical infrastructure of our cities and villages. I greet our volunteers, community activists, and all caring people of goodwill. I greet government leaders and diplomats, accompanying with prayer your efforts to achieve a just peace. I greet all refugees, displaced persons, and those who are far from home on this day of Paschal joy and victory. I convey to you the warm embrace of your mother Church.

I extend my Easter greetings and thank those who in Ukraine and abroad have opened their hearts to support their suffering sisters and brothers in need, materially and morally. I greet and bless our clergy, our military, hospital and academic chaplains, our monastics, especially on the frontline and in combat zones.

I embrace everyone: children, adults, and the elderly, men and women—and I wish that, in sharing the blessings of our Easter basket, you will feel the presence of the God of hope, who grants us joy and peace. I sincerely wish you a blessed Easter feast, a tasty sharing of our traditional blessed egg, and a Paschal joy that is full of light.

The grace of our Risen Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all!

Christ is risen! Truly, He is risen!



Given in Kyiv
at the Patriarchal Cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ,
on the 5th Sunday of Lent, dedicated to our Venerable Mother Mary of Egypt,
and the Repose of Saint Methodius, Teacher of the Slavs.

April 6, 2025 A.D.