

EASTER MESSAGE OF THE HIERARCHS OF THE UKRAINIAN GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH IN WESTERN EUROPE

*Who will roll away the stone from the
entrance to the tomb?*

Mark 16:3

**Reverend Fathers,
Venerable Brothers and Sisters,
Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ!**

Christ is risen! The myrrh-bearing women who witnessed the crucifixion of Jesus Christ could not accept that the burial took place so quickly, as there wasn't even time to anoint the Saviour's dead body with perfumed oils. So as soon as Saturday was over, they hurried to buy myrrh. But one question tormented them: "Who will roll away the stone from the entrance to the tomb?" It goes without saying that they wouldn't be able to cope with this. And this played on their minds.

But they kept going. Just then the sun was rising. After the darkness of Good Friday, there was a flash of light. This was the first day of the week when God created light (cf. Gen 1: 1-4). And the prophet Malachi wrote these words: "For you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness will rise, and in its rays will be salvation" (Ml 3:20). The problem of the stone remained, but something flashed in their souls and inspired them to continue towards their goal.

When they reached the tomb, they could not believe the wonder: the stone had already been rolled away! And not only this. Within the tomb they met an angel who told them, "You are looking for the crucified Jesus of Nazareth. He is risen, he is not here!" (Mark 16: 6). This was such a surprise that they were deeply moved, if not shocked. They did not expect this: they came to anoint Jesus' dead body, and here they find out that he *is alive*. The Church proclaims this Easter good tidings in the Easter verses, placing these words into the mouth of the Angel: "Why do you seek the Living among the dead? Why do you mourn in the Incorruptible among those subject to decay? Go, announce the Good News to his disciples!" (Sobor of Angels). They returned to Christ's disciples and, although at first "they said nothing to anyone because they were afraid" (Mark 16: 8), they later listened to the angel and told the apostles that Christ had risen from the dead. Thus, the myrrh-bearing women became the first heralds of Christ's resurrection.

Who will roll the stone away from the entrance to the tomb?

Dear Sisters and Brothers! Now, in this time of war, we may feel as powerless as myrrh-bearing women did then. We do not know who will help us to roll away the stone of ruin, the stone of despair, the stone of pain? Our nation is heroically defending its land, its freedom, and its dignity, but – in the truth of the matter - we are dealing with a powerful and insidious enemy. Evil has revealed its true face and brings fright upon us. We have so many questions and we live in constant uncertainty...

But we must turn our attention to the shining of Light of Christ. The Light flashed as Jesus rose from the grave, the Sun of Truth has shone and has changed the course of history. Although the Lord foretold his death and resurrection, his disciples at the time did not understand his words. We, like the apostles, hear the words of the Good News: "He is risen, he is not here" - but it is

difficult for us to understand when rockets are flying, buildings are being destroyed, people are fleeing, civilians are abused and killed. It is impossible for us to see the Light in the darkness of aggression, terror, and threat of death.

Maybe this is an opportunity for us to rethink our values? Let's consider about how we have lived thus far and what this war has taught us - when people have lost everything, left their homes with a single bag in their hands, others have remained under the ruins of their homes, or lie unburied on the streets of Ukrainian cities and villages. Undoubtedly, the current dramatic situation makes each of us reconsider our lives, our values, encourages us to put God first, and place our love for Him and our neighbour as a fundamental rule for our daily lives. We, amid the inhuman situation of Russian military aggression, are called to reveal God's face of love and the light of eternal life that shone from his tomb. It is Christ's resurrection that gives us this ancient and, at the same time, a new Easter view of our present life.

Who will roll the stone away from the entrance to the tomb?

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ! As the sun rises after night, spring comes after winter, and a new person is born after pregnancy, so now we must believe that although the "stone has been rolled to the entrance of the tomb" (Mark 15:46), it will not stay forever. Even if we come to the Lord's tomb without knowing who will roll the stone away, we must cherish a living hope in our hearts, "for nothing is impossible with God" (Luke 1:37). We believe in the victory of good over evil, we believe that the current trials will make us stronger, we believe that the Lord will not abandon us in our needs and sorrows. Let us now deepen our relationship with God. We can do this, because our Hope is not in our strength, or the quality of our weapons, or our fate - destiny. Our Hope is in the Lord! "By your resurrection, O Christ, you captured hell and resurrected man, make us worthy to praise and glorify You in purity of heart" (verse of the Paschal stichera).

In sending you, your families, and children a heartfelt Easter greeting, we bless each and every one of you. May the words of the risen Christ "Peace be with you!" accompany you in this difficult time and throughout your life.

Christ is risen! Indeed, He is risen!

Given in London, Rome, Munich, Paris, Kyiv
this 4th (Jul) 5th (Greg) Sunday of Lent - 3rd day of April, 2022

+ KENNETH (Nowakowski)

Bishop Eparch of the Eparchy of the Holy Family in London

+ DIONYSIUS (Lachovich)

Apostolic Exarch for Ukrainians in Italy

+ BOGDAN (Dziurach)

Apostolic Exarch for Ukrainians in Germany, Scandinavia and Iceland

+ HLIB (Lonchyna)

Apostolic Administrator of the Eparchy of St. Volodymyr in Paris

+ STEPAN (Sus)

Bishop Head of the Pastoral Migration department of the Patriarchal Curia of the UGCC