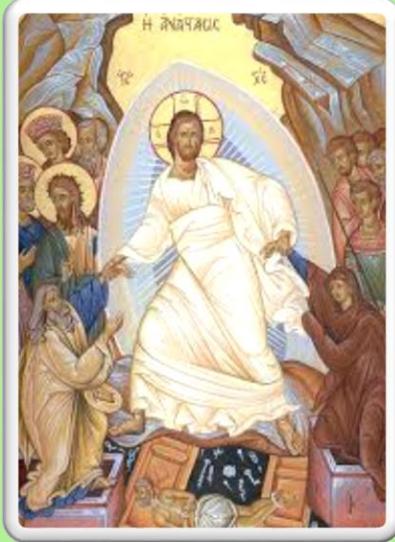


The Paschal Epistle

of the Permanent Conference of Ukrainian Orthodox Bishops Beyond the Borders of Ukraine in the Year of our Lord 2016



To the Reverend Clergy, the Deaconate in Christ, Venerable Monastics, and all the faithful of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church beyond the borders of Ukraine and on her native soil,

CHRIST IS RISEN!

There is no event and no greater news that is more joyful in the life of the Christian than the news of the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ for the Orthodox Church is the Feast of Feasts and the Festival of Festivals because the Resurrection of our Lord is the victory of life over death, of love over hatred, of truth over falsehood, of good over evil, of humility over pride, of faith over hopelessness, and of holiness over sin.

St. Paul says: “If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain, and our faith is in vain.” (1 Cor 15:14).

The Lord’s Resurrection fills our lives with meaning and purpose for which we can even forsake all that is temporary so that we may attain that which is eternal. Whatever we are suffering, whatever illness and misfortune we endure, whatever cross we bear to our personal Golgotha, we must know that our resurrection awaits us if we believe in the Lord, if we love Him, and if we hope in Him. He rose from death for us. With His death, He conquered death for each of us. He opened the way to eternal life for each of us by His Resurrection.

The darkness of the tomb is illuminated, and in the words of Saint John Chrysostom: “...for pardon has shone forth from the grave. Let no one fear death, for the Saviour’s death has set us free. He that was held prisoner of it has annihilated it. Death, where is thy sting? Christ is Risen, and life reigns. Christ is Risen, and no dead remain in the grave.” (*Paschal Epistle of St. John Chrysostom*).

God not only grants us a life here on earth, but today we celebrate and praise God’s unfathomable grace and love for us all, because through the power of the Risen Lord “corruptible mortality has put on incorruption and mortality has put on immortality” (1 Cor 15:54). Immortality is granted to us by the Lord, the source of the boundless joy of our faith because no one in our life can grant us anything more valuable and more important than the immortality given to us by the Risen Lord.

We live in the 21st century. It would seem that humanity has achieved much and has actually made great strides in scientific and technical progress. Many people and nations live in material abundance. And the world should have also become wiser based on its historical experience.

Unfortunately, war, hatred, and violence continue. Those with greater strength dominate over those who are weaker. Individuals and entire nations ignore God and His Commandments and show that we are living in eschatological times.

Material wealth or the desire to acquire material wealth does not always provide a guarantee for people that they will have a quiet and happy life. Instead, these can often cause troubles for others, and may even lead to self-destruction. The loss of a sense of sin and holiness leads to tragedies in people's personal and public life. People do not know what they live for and often do not see the meaning of life.

The meaning of life for every Christian is found in the words contained in the joy of Pascha: **“Christ is Risen from the dead, trampling down death by death and upon those in the tombs, bestowing life.”** (*Paschal Tropar*). The Risen Lord is the way, the truth, and the life for all of us (Jn 14:6). God has granted us the right to choose to live with Him or without Him. He is the way. Let us not doubt for a second, but choose the road that leads to Him. He is the Truth. Let us know that our heart can find peace only in Him. He is the life. Let us know that through His death on the Cross and His Resurrection, He grants immortality to all of us.

We, the episcopate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church Beyond the Borders of Ukraine, prayerfully appeal to the Risen Lord that He grant peace, joy and spiritual renewal to our God-loving Ukrainian people in Ukraine, in the North and South Americas, in Western Europe, and in Australia and New Zealand. Beloved in the Risen Christ “on this chosen and holy day, the Feast of Feasts, and the Festival of Festivals, we bless Christ to all the ages.” (*Paschal Matins, Canticle 8*).

CHRIST IS RISEN! INDEED HE IS RISEN!

With Archpastoral Blessings,

† **YURIJ**, Metropolitan
Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada
† **ANTONY**, Metropolitan
Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA
Metropolitan, Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the Diaspora
† **IOAN**, Archbishop
Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the Diaspora
† **JEREMIAH**, Archbishop
Ukrainian Orthodox Eparchy of Brazil and South America
† **ILARION**, Bishop
Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada
† **ANDRIY**, Bishop
Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada
† **DANIEL**, Bishop
Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA