



PASCHAL LETTER OF THE UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF CANADA

Christ is Risen! Indeed, He is Risen!

Dearly Beloved in Christ!

As we approach the great feast of Easter, which our Catechism rightly describes as the “feast of feasts” (*Christ our Pascha*, 559), we want to engage in joyful preparation. Yet, for many of us, the desire for the natural happiness of the season is clouded by the war in Ukraine, other looming conflicts, and the social and moral uncertainty within our own society.

At such a time, we may come to feel powerless, whether in our own personal lives or gathered with others in the society in which we presently find ourselves. We are somewhat like the Lord’s disciples at the time of the Passion—standing at a distance, confused and afraid, observing an unthinkable turn of events. Or we are like the Mother of God, the women, and John at the foot of the cross, standing helplessly and gazing upon the King of Kings, Who sacrifices all out of His love for us. However, no matter what we may be feeling in the present day, history tells us that dark times do eventually pass and even the most barbarous wars always end.

Our comfort, however, is not derived from waiting for an inevitably better wave of human civilization. We derive peace from the light of our Christian faith. Christ clearly gives us a message of hope and new life. He demonstrated this through His life-giving Passion and Resurrection, which we celebrate especially during this season. This message of hope and courage is found in His living Word and pervades the teachings of His Church. We are invited to learn this message well and to participate in its salvific power by sharing it throughout a world that so desperately needs to hear it today.

One of the most dramatic and impressive liturgical practices that we have in our Church year happens in the wee hours between Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday. We enter a darkened church, venerate the *plashchanytsya* (burial shroud of Christ), and contemplate that sad mystery of the Lord’s plan for our salvation. The shroud is taken away to the sanctuary and we exit the church, leaving behind the trappings of death and sorrow—the cross of execution, the tomb, and the mournful purple coverings. As we are leaving, the cantors begin to solemnly chant the hymn that speaks of the angels already singing about the Resurrection of the Saviour. We ask the Lord if we upon the earth may join them in their song, as our own souls cry out to enter into that joy.

We process around the church in the chilly darkness before sunrise. We stand at the closed doors of the church and proclaim, repeatedly, our faith and trust in the Resurrection. After the priest resolutely knocks thrice on the doors, they are flung open and we joyfully enter into a new reality. The tomb is moved aside, and the somber trimmings are replaced by

bright candles, flowers, and embroidery. The whole congregation boldly and joyously sings the proclamation: Christ is risen! Death is conquered! And the grave will never be an end to life. Our Lord, by His own love and sacrifice, has won this for us.

May each of the faithful throughout our Church and beyond have such an uplifting experience! May our Easter morning experience—as grandiose or humble as it may be—give each of us the joy and hope that we need for our times. Lately, not a few have wondered if we are passing through the challenges described in the 24th chapter of Matthew’s Gospel, where the Lord speaks of times of darkness and turmoil. Nevertheless, in this Paschal season, let us allow ourselves to also contemplate the 28th chapter of hope and courage. For we are called to always remember that our Lord came into our hopeless world to lead us into the light of a new and resurrected life with Him, where suffering passes and death is no more. “... for Christ our God has taken us from death to life, and from earth to heaven!” (*Ode 1, Canon of Pascha*).

The blessing of the Resurrected Lord be upon all of you!

Sincerely Yours in the Risen Lord,

+ **Lawrence** Huculak, OSBM
Metropolitan Archbishop of Winnipeg

+ **David** Motiuk
Eparchial Bishop of Edmonton

+ **Bryan** Bayda, C.S.s.R.
Eparchial Bishop of Toronto

+ **Michael** Kwiatkowski
Eparchial Bishop of New Westminster

+ **Michael** Smolinski, C.S.s.R.
Bishop of Saskatoon

+ **Andriy** Rabiy
Auxiliary Bishop of Winnipeg

+ **Michael** Wiwchar, C.S.s.R.
Bishop Emeritus of Saskatoon

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On Lazarus Saturday and commemoration of venerable Hilarion*
