



## EASTER PASTORAL LETTER OF HIS BEATITUDE SVIATOSLAV

*The godly-wise women hastened after you with myrrh  
And sought You, as dead, with tears  
But, rejoicing, they worshiped you as the living God,  
and proclaimed to Your disciples, O Christ, the mystical  
Pascha!*

Ode 7, Paschal Canon

### CHRIST IS RISEN!

#### **Beloved in Christ!**

Today, when the sun rises with dawn and reveals its paschal light, the Church invites us to set out on a journey together with the myrrh-bearing women. They are heading to the tomb – to the place where they witnessed the burial of Jesus Christ: “It was the day of Preparation, and the Sabbath was beginning. The women who had come with him from Galilee followed and saw the tomb and how his body was laid” (Luke 23:54–55).

In the Ode of Paschal Matins, the Church emphasizes a particular haste. Christ was hastily taken down from the cross, hastily buried without the proper honors that even an ordinary person is due: “Then they returned [home] and prepared spices and ointments. On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment” (Luke 23:56).

And now the women hasten once again: “But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus” (Luke 24:1–3). The words of the canon of Matins confirm that they were hastening not so much to the tomb as to Christ.

#### **The godly-wise women hastened after you with myrrh...**

The women disciples followed their Teacher from the very beginning of His preaching in Galilee. Christ Himself leads them to where they never expected to arrive. They are motivated by love and mercy for the Scorned and Deceased One.

Those who followed Christ, listened attentively to His teaching, witnessed various signs – miracles and healings, now become godly-wise myrrh-bearers. This is also our path of Christian discipleship, which we have traveled in a particular way during Great Lent.

Although Christ warned His disciples about what was to happen – betrayal, arrest, unjust conviction, cruel mockery and death on the cross – the myrrh-bearing women were not prepared either for the horror of the passion, or for an encounter with the

risen Lord. They come to the tomb with indescribable pain in their heart and their soul crying out.

**...and sought You, as dead, with tears.**

Like the myrrh-bearing women, our people have come to this paschal moment with sorrow in their hearts. We experience ever deeper pain and ever greater fatigue from this sacrilegious war.

Many women of Ukraine, setting out on their paschal journey to Christ, rush to the graves of our Heroes and innocent victims of enemy attacks. But this paschal longing for Christ especially cries out to the Lord through the mouths of the families of those missing-in-action and those who have not been able to bury their dead. One mother shared her grief with me: “My daughter has remained forever under the ruins of Azovstal in Mariupol. When will I be able to bury her?!”

With bitter sadness we search for the bodies of our dead. But we believe in the risen Savior! We believe that Christ, who today triumphantly emerges from the tomb, grants life and resurrection to all our departed. This truth is confirmed by the myrrh-bearing women, whom He leads to an encounter not with one who is dead, but with the living God. They become the first witnesses of the risen Lord Jesus. Only after hearing from the angel that He is risen, and having worshiped, rejoicing in the living God, will they be able to proclaim the mystical Pascha to Christ’s disciples (cf. Mt 28:5–8).

**...But, rejoicing, they worshiped you as the living God...**

The paschal hate of the myrrh-bearers is now prompted not by the desire to complete the funeral ritual, but by the joy of having experienced an encounter with the living God! They bring news of the Resurrection of Christ, because they themselves had accompanied Christ from His crucifixion, death and burial – to His resurrection.

The true spiritual joy of Pascha does not flow from the fulfillment of an annual ritual. It is born from the personal experience that Christ is alive. He remains present in His Resurrection in the midst of His Church. Today, the Church hurries to convey to each of us the joy of meeting the Risen One, inviting us, together with all of God’s people, to worship in joy the living God, and to proclaim the mystical Pascha to all people. For Christ is risen!

We encounter the living God – our risen Savior – in the Holy Mysteries--Sacraments of Christ’s Church. Since the times of early Christianity, it was on the Easter vigil that the Church in the Sacrament of Baptism gave birth to new Christians.

We prepared for this encounter with the living God with a forty-day fast, and today we approach Holy Communion of the Body and Blood of our Savior, bringing to Him,

like fragrant myrrh, our Christian life and the daily witnessing of our faith, renewed by repentance, fasting, and prayer.

To be a Christian in our time means to believe in the resurrection, to share the joy of a personal encounter with Christ, to proclaim to everyone the mysterious Pascha of Christ. That is what it means to proclaim today to everyone we meet our Easter greeting: “Christ is risen!” – and to answer aloud and with conviction: “Truly, He is risen!”

### **And proclaimed to Your disciples, O Christ, the mystical Pascha!**

Pascha is the moment of transformation! We hear how women, filled with pain, sought the Deceased One, but instead found the joy of the Risen One. Today, indeed, in this mystical encounter with the risen Lord in the community of the Church, through the power and action of the Holy Spirit, tears are transformed into joy.

It is important to note that Christ does not eliminate the weeping of the women, does not take away their tears, but transforms them. He transforms their sadness into a place of encounter, which becomes the source of a joy that no one can take away from us.

Christ announced this to the apostles at the Last Supper, saying: “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy... So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you” (John 16:20–22). This is the mystery of Christ’s Pascha: this joy of the heart does not fade but is renewed from generation to generation for those who receive it and share it.

We celebrate Pascha, and therefore, we believe in the victory of life over death. We believe that our sadness will also turn into joy because “Christ is truly risen!” Even though deadly missiles and drones fly in “from the east” every day, we already see that the paschal sun shines above them with heavenly radiance, which carries within itself the pledge of victory and the basis of our hope for the complete liberation and revival of our people.

This light will become a source of strength and endurance for us: in the task of worthily honoring of our fallen Heroes; in the return of our captives to their homes; in the release of illegally detained, forcibly deported and kidnapped Ukrainian children; in finding the missing-in-action; and in healing our physical and spiritual wounds and traumas because “Christ is truly risen!”

With faith in the risen Christ and the power of His holy Resurrection, we will rebuild everything that has been destroyed, return to our native lands and unite the sons and daughters of Ukraine scattered throughout the world because “Christ is truly risen!”

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ! Let me greet each of you on this bright day that the Lord made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it! Today, the victory of the living God is our victory because despite the evil days caused by the forces of darkness, God's love, life and joy remain invincible. We ourselves are witnesses to this.

First of all, I would like to address our soldiers and all those who defend Ukraine, as well as their loved ones. On behalf of our Church, I express my deep gratitude to you for showing steadfastness and indomitability of spirit. I wish you Easter's joy, victory and peace.

To the families of the dead and missing-in-action, I want to wipe away your tears and strengthen you with paschal faith and hope that the risen Lord embraces your loved ones with His love and rewards with eternal life every sacrifice made out of love for one's people and neighbor.

I greet all who are presently healing their wounds – physical or spiritual. I entrust you into the loving hands of the heavenly Healer – the risen Christ, who bears wounds on his body as a sign of boundless love, in which you also participate, dear brothers and sisters. I greet our doctors, nurses, rehabilitation specialists and chaplains. I accompany their efforts with daily prayer.

I share the paschal joy with all workers and volunteers of civil infrastructure: energy supply, transport, education, medicine. I greet our authorities and all who work tirelessly to preserve human life and human dignity, the country's independence and integrity.

I especially greet all our families – domestic Churches, so that in the family circle you may experience paschal joy and peace together: parents with children, youth and the elderly. May the risen Lord be at the center of your family life, so that, having worshiped the living God with joy, you may proclaim to others His faithful and all-conquering love.

I convey paschal greetings and thank those who in Ukraine and abroad continue to support their needy and suffering sisters and brothers materially and morally. I greet and bless our pastors, military, hospital and academic chaplains, as well as our monastic communities, especially in the frontline and combat zones.

I embrace you all – those who celebrate at home and those who are far from their homes. I wish you a joyful and blessed Easter feast, a sincere sharing of the Easter basket, of a tasty blessed egg and lushly colored eggs. May our traditional hayivka dances fill your hearts with joy and a sense of God's peace.

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!**

**† SVIATOSLAV**

*Given in Kyiv at the Patriarchal Cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ, on the Feast of the Annunciation of the Most Holy Theotokos and on the day of the Blessed priest-martyr Omelyan Kovch, March 25, 2026 A.D.*