

The Serbian Orthodox Church to her spiritual children at Pascha, 2010

I R I N E J

By the grace of God

Orthodox Archbishop of Pec, Metropolitan of Belgrade-Karlovci and Serbian Patriarch, with the all the Hierarchs of the Serbian Orthodox Church – to all the clergy, monastics, and all the sons and daughters of our Holy Church: grace, mercy and peace from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, with the joyous Paschal greeting:

**CHRIST IS RISEN!
INDEED HE IS RISEN!**

*“Christ is risen from dead,
trampling down death by death and
upon those in the tombs bestowing life.”
(Paschal troparion)*

In greeting you, dear brothers and sisters, with the words of this all-joyous and victorious hymn of Christ’s Resurrection, we would remind you that the Resurrection is the foundation of the Church and the source of faith and hope in our life on earth. Christ’s Resurrection is the seal and crown of God’s love toward this world and man: “...For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)

The Resurrection is a Biblical mystery, for centuries hidden in the bosom of the Old Testament only to finally be proclaimed to the world in the New Testament – with the Resurrection from the dead of the God-Man Jesus Christ. (cf. Matthew 28:6)

The mystery of the Resurrection connected with the arrival of the Messiah is foreshadowed in the books of many prophets of the Old Testament. The great Prophet Isaiah confesses belief in the personal and general Resurrection with words: “The dead shall rise up, and those in the tombs shall arise,” (Isaiah 26:19) and calls all Israel to participate in that joy of the promised Resurrection: “Rise and sing all ye in the earth, for your dew is a healing for them, but the land of the ungodly shall come to an end.” (Isaiah 26:19) The Prophet David witnesses to the

same in his psalms by connecting the mystery of the Resurrection with the arrival of the Messiah. With his psalms he affirms that faith in the Resurrection is the faith of all the righteous ones from the Old Testament, whose souls God would not leave in Hades, “For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, nor allow Your Holy One to see corruption,” (Psalm 15:10) directing us with this verse toward the First Resurrected One, the Messiah – Christ. And other prophets from the Old Testament affirm the mystery of the Resurrection. The Prophet Elijah resurrects the son of a widow in Zarephath of Sidon (3 Kings 17), foreshadowing with that miracle that the reality of the Resurrection will spread to all nations on earth (cf. Luke 4:26). The book of Ezekiel gives us a moving prefiguration of the general resurrection. The holy Prophet Ezekiel, inspired by the Holy Spirit of God, sees the bringing back to life of human bones from the dust of the earth, bones which will be gathered at the end of history and right before the General Judgment of God: “Then He said to me, ‘Prophecy to these bones and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord to these bones: Behold, I will bring the Spirit of life upon you.’” (Ezekiel 37:4-5)

In the New Testament we can truly say that the Resurrection is the beginning and the end, the alpha and the omega (cf. Revelation 1:8), for it is identified with faith in Christ: “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, yet he shall live” (John 11:25). To believe in Christ means to believe in the Resurrection.

All the miracles and signs described in the books of the New Testament happen on Christ’s way to Golgotha and the Resurrection. The Gospel description of Jairus’ daughter’s resurrection (cf. Matthew 9:18-26) and that of the widow’s son (cf. Luke 7:12-15), and especially of the resurrection of the four-day-dead Lazarus in Bethany (cf. John 11:5-46), affirm the truth that Christ is the Resurrection and the Life. He came into this world to give us Resurrection, as we sing during these holy days in the resurrection services. Neither something else – nor anything less! Our Lord did not bring a new philosophy, nor new ethics; rather He brought us new life, which He granted to us as a pledge of the future Resurrection in the holy mystery of Baptism. (cf. Galatians 3:27) The Lord Jesus Christ offered Himself on Golgotha as an unblemished Sacrifice on behalf of all and for all, as we confess and experience in the central part of Liturgy of the Church, as we commune of the Body and Blood of “Christ Crucified and Resurrected for us.” Christ is the paschal Lamb of the New Testament. By His Cross and His Resurrection on the third day He finally and perfectly showed that He is the Messiah and Savior of the world and “that there is no other name on earth by which we could be saved.” (cf. Acts 4:12)

The Holy Apostle Paul when speaking of Christ's Resurrection said: "If Christ is not risen our faith is in vain..., but Christ *is* risen and has become the First-born of the dead." (I Corinthians 15:17-20) The Holy Apostle Paul preached to Greek philosophers and wise men about "the unknown God" (cf. Acts 17:23), telling them particularly about Christ's Resurrection from the dead. Christ's victory over death is the affirmation of the truthfulness of Christ's Divinity. That is why in the Gospel the holy apostles are called "witnesses of Christ's Resurrection." (cf. Acts 1:22) By the truth about Christ and His Resurrection, the apostles conquered "ancient arrogant Rome" and "as Galileans rather than Aristotelians" they proclaimed the news about Christ the Savior from end to end of the universe. (Romans 10:18) The two thousand years of the Church's history, born on the day of Pentecost by the Holy Spirit, and affirmed by the preaching of the Apostles and Holy Fathers, is the greatest and the best proof that the Resurrected Lord is with us and that He will be with us "always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:20)

Remembering these Gospel testimonies and the truth about our Resurrected Lord Jesus Christ, "in whom we live, move and exist" (Acts 17:28), guided by pastoral concern, we call upon you, our dear spiritual children, to confess and safeguard your faith in the Resurrection, not only with words, but with your life and works. In this regard, the Holy Gospel admonishes us to avoid "parasynagogues", that is to avoid sectarian-type separatism and gatherings as well as false prophets and teachers, for they "come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves" (Matthew 7:15). Let us safeguard our Orthodox Tradition inherited from the Apostles and the Holy Fathers, from Saint Sava and Saint Simeon the Myrrhflowing. St. Sava, before the myrrhflowing relics of his father, brought peace between his two feuding brothers, and with that he called us to always and everywhere live in brotherly love and unity.

We greet our brothers and sisters, our spiritual children, in Kosovo and Metohija. We greet them with a greeting of the Cross and Resurrection, seeing how the clergy and faithful people of God attend their church and holy shrines in peace and love, tranquility and obedience, participate in the services and partake of the Divine Mysteries of Christ in these holy and saving days of Christ's ascent to Jerusalem to conquer death and open the door of Resurrection and life eternal to all of us. Bishop Atanasije, who per the decision of our Patriarch and the Holy Synod is temporarily substituting for Bishop Artemije, is visiting our faithful and the holy shrines throughout Kosovo and Metohija, and in unity and oneness of mind with the clergy and faithful serves from royal Prizren in the south, throughout Metohija to Velika Hoca and Pech, and from the foothills of Shara through Kosovo Pomoravlje to Novo Brdo and Mitrovica, to the foothills of Kopaonik in the north.

Thank God, our people are resolved to stay and exist on this holy altar, believing in the Cross and Resurrection of Christ and our own resurrection, always safeguarding themselves from disunity and ill-conceived confusing stories that do not lead to the safeguarding of the faith and of the spiritual and national identity.

Our faithful know what it means to hold fast to the *healthy words* of our Lord and to sound pious teachings, and, on the other hand, they also know what futile arguing means, “from which comes envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wrangling of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain.” (I Timothy 6:3-5) In rebuilt holy shrines prayers are offered in one mind and heart by our clergy and people: “Commending ourselves and each another and our whole life to Christ our God!” With one mouth and one heart a prayer of unity in the Faith and in the communion of the Holy Spirit is being sung to the glory of the Union of the Holy Trinity and to the safeguarding of the Orthodox conciliarity of church and people.

We pray to God that, through the prayers of Saint Sava and Saint Tsar Lazar, peace and freedom are returned to our suffering Kosovo, our spiritual cradle and our Jerusalem, the place of our greatest holy shrines, which are pearls of Orthodox culture and the common treasure of all Christendom.

We also exhort all our pious people living in our homeland and elsewhere to live and rejoice in Christ’s Resurrection. The Resurrection calls us to safeguard the unity of our Holy Church and that we never subjugate our Community and our common interests to earthly interests. The Holy Apostle Paul calls and admonishes us not to be “lawless and insubordinate” (cf. I Timothy 1:9), bringing to life “old wounds” of already healed divisions of the body of St. Sava’s Church. Let us then live in the unity of our Mother Church and in love and unity with one another, preserving according to the words of the already-mentioned apostle to many nations, “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” (Ephesians 4:3)

At this time of the Resurrection, the Church always stresses the value and holiness of human life, from the beginning of conception to the full maturity of every unique and God-like human person, objecting to every form of violence against them. To this end, we are not only reminded by God’s command: *Do not kill!* (Exodus 20:13), but even more so by the Resurrection of Christ, because it reveals to us the deepest meaning of creation and of the existence of the world and man, which is the salvation “of all and everything” in the Crucified and Resurrected Christ. (cf. I Corinthians 1:23)

Today's man, plagued with worries of this world and blinded by a selfish consumer mentality, avoids the encounter with the mystery of life and death. "Cursed questions" which great human minds like Dostoyevsky and many others have dealt with in our time, do not have many inquirers. We are witnesses, unfortunately, that the "civilization of death" is becoming more and more apparent. Many worldly religions and even the philosophy and art of our time are embracing, according to the words of Father Alexander Schmemmann, "peacemaking with death". Death is, according to them, the one reality, the beginning and end of the world. The Church of Christ affirms and witnesses exactly the opposite. The Church confesses and preaches the deepest dignity and sanctity of human life, believing in Christ's Resurrection which triumphs over our greatest and last enemy, which is death. (cf. Corinthians 15:26)

A great Russian elder Saint Seraphim of Sarov would greet all his visitors with these words: "My joy, Christ is Risen!", with this greeting showing that the Church of Christ and her saints live in the present reality of the Resurrection. May God grant that we too may become witnesses of that truth and that the joy of the Resurrection may shine forth in our souls and our faces – that joy which was seen on the face of the recently departed Athonite elder Joseph of Vatopedi, who contrary to the laws of biology, departed with a smile on his face.

Greeting you all, our brothers and sisters, we call you to live in love toward God and your neighbors, walking the path that leads to life eternal. Living in such a way, we will become and we will be sons and daughters of the Resurrection.

**Christ Is Risen!
Indeed He Is Risen!**

Given at the Serbian Patriarchate in Belgrade at Pascha 2010.
Your prayerful intercessors before the Risen Lord:

Archbishop of Pec,
Metropolitan of Belgrade-Karlovci and
Serbian Patriarch IRINEJ

Metropolitan of Zagreb and Ljubljana JOVAN
Metropolitan of Montenegro and the Coastlands AMPHILOHIJE
Metropolitan of Libertyville-Chicago CHRISTOPHER
Metropolitan of Dabro-Bosna NIKOLAJ

Bishop of Sabac LAVRENTIJE
Bishop of Zvornik-Tuzla VASILIJE
Bishop of Srem VASILIJE

Bishop of Banja Luka JEFREM
Bishop of Budim LUKIJAN
Bishop of Canada GEORGIJE
Bishop of Banat NIKANOR
Bishop of New Gracanica – Midwestern America LONGIN
Bishop of Eastern America MITROPHAN
Bishop of Zica CHRYSOSTOM
Bishop of Backa IRINEJ
Bishop of Great Britain and Scandinavia DOSITEJ
Bishop of Ras and Prizren ARTEMIJE
Bishop of Bihac and Petrovac CHRYSOSTOM
Bishop of Osijek and Baranja LUKIJAN
Bishop of Central Europe CONSTANTINE
Bishop of Western Europe LUKA
Bishop of Timok JUSTIN
Bishop of Vranje PAHOMIJE
Bishop of Sumadija JOVAN
Bishop of Slavonia SAVA
Bishop of Branicevo IGNATIJE
Bishop of Milesevo FILARET
Bishop of Dalmatia FOTIJE
Bishop of Budimlje and Niksic JOANIKIJE
Bishop of Zahumlje and Hercegovina GRIGORIJE
Bishop of Valjevo MILUTIN
Bishop of Western America MAXIM
Bishop of Gornji Karlovac GERASIM
Bishop of Australia and New Zealand IRINEJ
Retired Bishop of Zahumlje and Hercegovina ATANASIJE,
Administrator of Raska and Prizren Diocese
Vicar Bishop of Hvosno ATANASIJE
Vicar Bishop of Jegar PORFIRIJE
Vicar Bishop of Lipljan TEODOSIJE
Vicar Bishop of Dioclea JOVAN
Vicar Bishop of Moravica ANTONIJE

THE ARCHDIOCESE OF OCHRID

Archbishop of Ochrid and Metropolitan of Skoplje JOVAN
Bishop of Polos and Kumanovo JOAKIM
Bishop of Bregal and locum tenens of the Diocese of Bitolj MARKO
Vicar Bishop of Stobija DAVID

[Path of Orthodoxy translation]