



Office of the Metropolitan

312 Garfield Street

Johnstown, PA 15906

April 24, 2022

Protocol No. 14/2022

PASCHA ARCHPASTORAL LETTER

To the Very Reverend Protopresbyters, Very Reverend and Reverend Fathers, and Faithful (young and old) of our God-Protected Diocese:

CHRIST IS RISEN!

INDEED HE IS RISEN!

**“Christ is Risen from the dead, trampling down death by death,
and to those in the tombs bestowing life.”**

Today I greet you with great love and joy in the Name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ following His glorious Resurrection. On Great and Holy Pascha, we behold the triumph of Christ, as He rose from death to life, from darkness of the tomb into the Light. With the Resurrection of Christ, all Creation is filled with a new Light of life and joy. On this Feast of Feasts, this Holy Day of Holy Days, we all proclaim the only truth that matters, the Truth that Christ is Risen!

We gather together as family and friends, in joy and in love, celebrating the presence of the Risen Lord in our midst, and singing with one voice the triumphant hymn “Christ is Risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and to those in the tombs bestowing life.”

This day of the Resurrection marks the beginning of an explosion of joy that comes immediately after the spiritually intense and challenging period of Great Lent and Holy Week. This beautiful hymn captures in three verses the fundamental message of the Feast of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is a message of victory, of love, and of hope in everlasting life. On this day and throughout the Paschal season over the next 40 days, we proclaim this message of victory, of love and of hope together in song through this hymn at the beginning of very divine service in our Church. This hymn, simple in form yet deep in power, is worthy of study as we seek to fully understand its meaning.

The first verse of the hymn expresses the reality of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, “Christ is Risen from the dead.” This reality of the Resurrection has been a distinguishing feature of Christianity

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from the beginning. St Paul expresses this idea to the Corinthians "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins" (I. Corinthians 15:17). He declares unequivocally that Christ has been raised from the dead, that He appeared after His Resurrection to as many as 500 people at a time, most of whom were still alive when St. Paul was writing (I. Corinthians 15:6). The reassuring words of this Epistle continue to provide us today with their intended effect, which is that our faith in Christ is not futile at all and that, because of the reality of His Resurrection, we are no longer held captive to our sins.

The second verse of the Paschal hymn explains to us the extraordinary manner by which Christ conquered death's dominion over us once and for all: "Trampling down death by death." When Jesus was crucified, He took on the sins of all humanity and suffered the intensity of which remains truly incomprehensible to us as human beings. This demonstrates the unending love of our God, Who took on human flesh and Who died on a Cross for our salvation. By submitting Himself to death, Christ not only annihilated sin but also death. The final defeat of the archenemy death could not happen but only through death itself, not an ordinary death however, but the death of God who became man.

The third and final verse reveals the very essence of the Feast, for it encapsulates the full consequence of Christ's Resurrection from the dead: "And to those in the tombs bestowing life." To all of us on this day then, this is a day of promise and of hope for everlasting life with Him. This last verse reiterates the message that St. Paul was communicating to the Romans when he wrote that as Christians we are dead to sin, but alive in Christ: "We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of God, we too might walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). This is the message of our Orthodox Christian faith which we celebrate on this day of Pascha and indeed every day of our lives here on Earth. It is a message that proclaims our ultimate victory over all forces of darkness that attempt to impede our progress on the road to salvation and eternal life with Jesus Christ.

It is in this spirit that our repeated singing of this beautiful triumphant hymn for 40 days will enable us to come closer and closer toward understanding the power of its message:

CHRIST IS RISEN! INDEED HE IS RISEN!

May the Clergy and Laity, Friends and Supporters of the American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese experience the love, joy, and excitement of the early followers of Christ when they first saw Him after His Resurrection. Christ is Risen!

Working in the Risen Lord's Vineyard with much love,


+Metropolitan Gregory of Nyssa

To be read as the sermon in all churches of the Diocese at the Divine Liturgy on the Feast of the Resurrection of our Lord, God, and Saviour Jesus Christ!

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