



**The Serbian Orthodox Church
to her spiritual children at Pascha, 2017**

+IRINEJ

By the Grace of God

Orthodox Archbishop of Pec, Metropolitan of Belgrade Karlovci and Serbian Patriarch, with 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!

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

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The Resurrection of our Lord is the greatest Christian feast day. It is the feast day of faith, life and of every blessing from God. Our entire faith is in the Resurrection and the Resurrection is in our faith. The Holy Apostle Paul, the teacher of the nations, whom we unreservedly can call the greatest preacher of the Resurrection of Christ and our own, clearly said: “But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.” (I Corinthians 15:20) Faith in the Resurrection of Christ is the essence of the apostolic preaching and teaching, the foundation of the Church and of her services and theology.

In the Holy Scriptures the Resurrection is the central theme, in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament. The Resurrection is spoken of in two mutually connected meanings: as the general resurrection of the dead at the end of the history of mankind (cf. Isaiah 26:19), and as Christ’s Resurrection, foretold by the Old Testament prophets (cf. Psalm 15:10), and confirmed through the preaching of the Holy Apostles (cf. Acts 2:23-24).

The Old Testament, with its language and prototypes, in many places talks about resurrection. The prophet David speaks about it in his Psalms (Psalm 15:9; 16:15). The greatly suffering Job with faith in the resurrection cries out to God: “For I know that my Redeemer lives and that in my flesh I shall see God.” (Job 19:25-27) The prophet Jonah is a prototype of Christ’s three day resurrection. (cf. St. Matthew 12:40) The most well-known vision of the resurrection of the dead in the Old Testament is given in the book of the prophet Ezekiel: he, inspired by the Spirit of God, sees how the dry bones come to life and how each one puts on human flesh. (cf. Ezekiel 37:1-10) That vision filled the hearts of all believing Jews of the Old Testament and it was inseparable from the faith in the coming of the Messiah and in His Resurrection. (cf. Isaiah 53:10)

The New Testament is, on the other hand, entirely centered in the mystery of the Cross

and Resurrection of Christ. This is confirmed by the Holy Evangelists' emotive description of the last events from Christ's life that happened in Jerusalem: His judgment before Pilate, His Crucifixion, His death on the Cross, but also His glorious Resurrection. (cf. St. Matthew 27-28; St. Luke 23-24) The first ones who were made worthy to become witnesses of Christ's Resurrection were the myrrhbearing women (cf. St. Mark 16:1-2), and then the Holy Apostles and the fullness of the ancient Church. They are joined with the first Christian martyrs and all later martyrs, and the new martyrs, true witnesses of Christ's Resurrection, as well as the Fathers of the Church, who through the holy councils, through the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed and through their dogmatic teaching have bequeathed to us the faith in the resurrection. The Church itself is a witness that Christ is with us throughout all ages. (cf. St. Matthew 28:20) The Church witnesses to this, most especially, in the Divine Liturgy, which is celebrated in remembrance of the "death and Resurrection of Christ." In the Divine Liturgy the Resurrected Christ is given to us in Holy Communion. Let us, then, be children of the Resurrection! Let us live by the Resurrection of Christ, as the Holy Apostle Paul said, and not allow anything to separate us from His love! (Romans 8:35)

The great Russian elder, Saint Seraphim of Sarov, would greet the pilgrims who came to his monastery throughout the entire year with these words: "Christ is risen, my joy!" To reach that spiritual state, in the words of Saintly Bishop Nicholai "we must with our very life kiss Christ's Crucifixion, not out of custom, but rather as our own crucifixion, and kiss his wounds as our own wounds."

With sadness and pain in our heart we must say that today's world is not following the road of resurrection, but instead is following the road of death and hopelessness. When we say this we have in mind the fact that in Serbia every year the equivalent of a whole city dies due to the mortality rate being larger than the birth rate. This is a reason for weeping and wailing, but it is also an alarm for admonition. Something must be done to stop this way of death. "A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they were no more." (St. Matthew 2:18) Abortion is always and everywhere, and even among our own people, a deadly sin which cries to heaven. We must stop killing our own children in the womb! They too have a right to life and resurrection. We ask where are those pretentious "fighters for human rights" to protect the weakest among us – unborn children in their mothers' womb. Let us, brothers and sisters, leave the country of sin and death, as the Israelites of old left Egypt, and God will bless us with every spiritual blessing, so that we may be People of the Living God. May the joyous cry of newborn children be stronger than the helpless cries of death! May Serbia and the entire world, once again, become a great Cradle! Let us return to faith in life, let us return to the Resurrection!

Dear brothers and sisters, the Holy Orthodox Church is our spiritual Mother. She cares for her children regardless of where they live and she is crucified with her sons and daughters so that all together they may achieve the Resurrection. Let us rejoice with those who have joy and let us mourn with those who mourn, bearing one another's burdens, for in this way we will fulfill the law of Christ! (cf. Galatians 6:2) The Holy Elder Sofronios (Sakharov) said that the fulfillment of God's commandments crucifies in us the old man and resurrects the new man created according to the image of God, our Creator and Savior. In the same spirit, Saint Basil the Great also talks about the transformational meaning of fasting and said that God's angels record the names of those who keep the entire Great Lent, for by their fasting they renounce the earthly and transitory in order to gain the eternal and heavenly, and that is resurrection. By fulfilling the commandments of God, we express and confirm our love towards Christ (St. John 14:15), but also towards our neighbors. (cf. St. Matthew 22:40)

Today's world has largely adopted a different philosophy, the philosophy of the wide

road that leads to destruction. (cf. St. Matthew 7:13) Attempts are being made to replace Christian virtues with a seeming humanism and the false spirituality of the Far East. All false religions and para-religions, philosophies and false philosophies, ideologies and modern mythologies are enslaved to death and are sentencing human beings to death inasmuch as they believe that man is “a being for death”, and not a being meant for eternal life, especially if they encourage people to murder and kill themselves, either quickly (in wars and in bloody “peaceful” conflicts) or over time (by licentious living in every kind of vice, especially in slavery to drugs). We live in a time when some try to make evil look like good, and good evil; while sin, according to the Holy Elder Paisius the Athonite, is made out to be something modern and acceptable. Idols, anti-heroes, disobedience to parents and rejection of every authority are being offered to our youth instead of examples of virtue and honesty. Great is the responsibility of the Church, but also of all educational institutions of this country, because it is necessary to help the youth to find the way of authentic life and resurrection. Let us teach our children to be like the young man in the Gospel who asked the Lord: “What should I do to inherit eternal life?” And this young man received from Christ this answer: “Observe the commandments!” Here is the way to salvation, here is the resurrection!

We paternally call all those who have separated themselves for any reason from the One, Holy, Catholic (Saborna) and Apostolic Church to return to her fold. The sin of schism and heresy is truly a terrible one. According to the Holy Fathers not even the martyr’s blood can cleanse it. Let us forgive each other by the Resurrection and let us again be brothers in our Holy Church, the only Ship of our salvation!

We greet all of our spiritual children in our Fatherland and abroad with the Paschal salutation, and we pray that the Resurrected Lord will grant the joy of the Resurrection to all. We especially greet our faithful in the crucified Kosovo and Metohija, that inseparable part of Serbia, whose holy shrines are guardians not only of Serbian Orthodoxy but also of Christianity in Europe. Kosovo was and will remain ours, because God is found not in force but in justice, and He is able to return to us that which is being taken away from us by force.

By this feast of the Resurrection may Serbia and the entire Serbian people be resurrected, as our poets used to say. May God grant that those who lead and guard our country may be inspired with the spirit of the Resurrection and the spirit of faith in the victory of good over evil! May the Resurrected Lord, the Conqueror of death and Giver of Life, grant every good to His People, that is to say, to the entire Christian and Orthodox race, and to all people of good will, that we all may have even now a foretaste of the joy of the future age, the joy of resurrection and eternal life!

Christ is Risen!

Your intercessors before the Crucified and Resurrected Christ:

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

Metropolitan of Montenegro and the Coastlands **AMPHILOHIJE**
Metropolitan of Zagreb and Ljubljana **PORFIRIJE**
Bishop of Sabac **LAVRENTIJE**
Bishop of Srem **VASILIJE**
Bishop of Banja Luka **JEFREM**

Bishop of Budim **LUKIJAN**
Bishop of Banat **NIKANOR**
Bishop of New Gracanica-Midwestern America **LONGIN**
Bishop of Canada **MITROPHAN**
Bishop of Backa **IRINEJ**
Bishop of Great Britain and Scandinavia **DOSITEJ**
Bishop of Zvornik-Tuzla **CHRYSOSTOM**
Bishop of Osijek and Baranja **LUKIJAN**
Bishop of Western Europe **LUKA**
Bishop of Zicha **JUSTIN**
Bishop of Vranje **PAHOMIJE**
Bishop of Sumadija **JOVAN**
Bishop of Branicevo **IGNATIJE**
Bishop of Dalmatia **FOTIJE**
Bishop of Bihac and Petrovac **ATANASIJE**
Bishop of Budimlje and Niksic **JOANIKIJE**
Bishop of Zahumlje and Hercegovina **GRIGORIJE**
Bishop of Valjevo **MILUTIN**
Bishop of Ras and Prizren **TEODOSIJE**
Bishop of Western America **MAXIM**
Bishop of Gornji Karlovac **GERASIM**
Bishop of Eastern America **IRINEJ**
Bishop of Krusevac **DAVID**
Bishop of Slavonia **JOVAN**
Bishop of Austria and Switzerland **ANDREJ**
Bishop of Frankfurt and all Germany **SERGIJE**
Bishop of Timok **ILARION**
Bishop of Australia and New Zealand **SILUAN**

Vicar Bishop of Moravica **ANTONIJE**
Vicar Bishop of Toplica **ARSENIJE**
Vicar Bishop of Diokleia **KIRIL**

THE ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF OCHRID:
Archbishop of Ochrid and Metropolitan of Skoplje **JOVAN**
Bishop of Polog and Kumanovo **JOAKIM**
Bishop of Bregalnica **MARKO**
Vicar Bishop of Stobi **DAVID**

[Path of Orthodoxy translation]