

PASCHAL ARCHPASTORAL REFLECTION

of the Council of Bishops of the UOC of the USA and Diaspora

To the beloved Clergy, Monastics and Faithful entrusted to our spiritual care in the United States of America, South America, Western Europe, Australia, and New Zealand, as well as all our beloved Sisters and Brothers in once again long-suffering Ukraine.

Dear Brothers and Concelebrants and all our Spiritual Children in the Vineyard of our Lord,

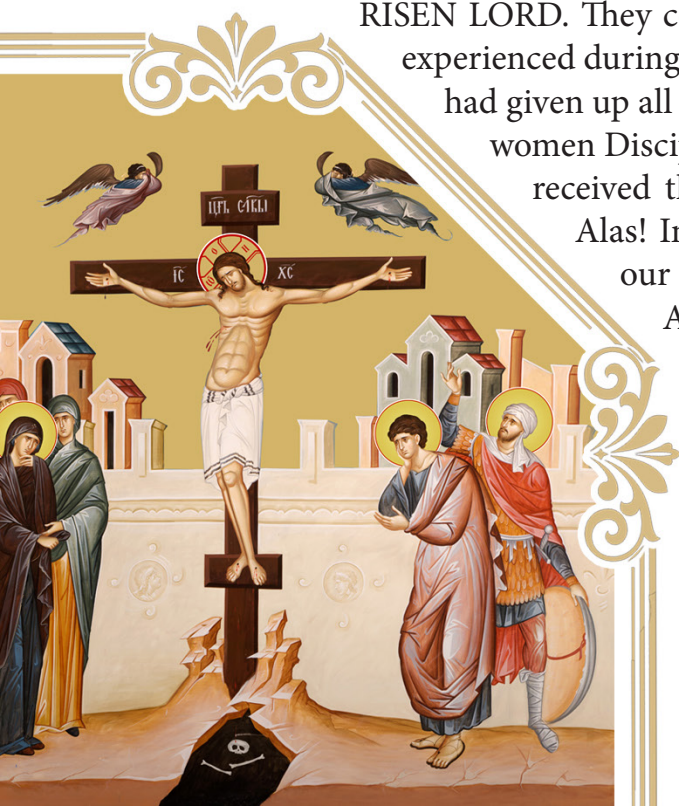
CHRIST IS RISEN! INDEED HE IS RISEN!

On this most joyous occasion of the celebration of the Resurrection of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we extend heartfelt greetings to you, your loved ones, and our entire Ukrainian Orthodox community throughout the world, wishing you all a joyful and blessed Pascha – RESURRECTION FEAST!

As we gather in the spirit of Paschal joy, we are reminded of the profound significance of this sacred season. Pascha is not merely a celebration of the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, but a testament to the triumph of Light over darkness, of Hope over despair and of LOVE over hate.

As we celebrate this sacred season, we are called to enter into the joy of the Disciples who encountered the Lord after His Resurrection. We can imagine the incredible joy experienced by Mary Magdalene, the Apostles and the Disciples on the road to Emmaus as they encountered our RISEN LORD. They could not believe it initially, because of the horrors they all experienced during Holy Week, culminating in the Crucifixion. Just when they had given up all hope, they hear the GOOD NEWS from the myrrh-bearing women Disciples! Understandably, considering their circumstances, they received that news with skepticism, distrust and much reservation. Alas! In the depth of doubt, how much greater was the joy when our Risen Lord appeared to them casting out all doubt and fear. And their JOY was beyond measure.

Indeed, this is what we are called to do this Pascha – to seek the Risen Lord, not in the darkness of a tomb, but where we are. He is ALIVE in our midst! He is present to us, as He was to Mary Magdalene and the disciples walking to Emmaus. However, some among us have difficulty experiencing His presence because we



are, indeed, living in tombs of our own creation sinfulness, weakness of faith, judgmental attitudes, hatred or especially the tomb of unwillingness to forgive others their trespasses. Or perhaps we are swallowed up in past sins and mistakes of our lives, which we refuse to let go through the Sacrament of Holy Penance (Confession) – or even after Penance where all has been forgiven. All these tombs can be wiped from existence if only we joyfully receive the Risen Christ our Lord from the empty Tomb, which now emanates the EVERLASTING LIGHT OF THE RESURRECTION!

In the midst of this sacred joy, we cannot ignore the somber reality of the ongoing invasion in Ukraine. The battle that rages on is a stark manifestation of the age-old struggle between Light and darkness, between forces of Righteousness and evil. Yet, in the face of such darkness, we must hold steadfast to the Eternal Truth that the Resurrection Light can never be extinguished and believe that the faithful of Ukraine experience it with us and are thus, filled with new hope.

To our parish communities and individuals across the globe we extend our deepest gratitude for your unwavering faith and steadfast support of our brothers and sisters in Ukraine. Your commitment to serving and caring for our people in the Name of Christ our Lord, exemplifies the true spirit of PASCHA. As we gather in prayer and fellowship during these Holiest of Holy Days, may we draw strength from one another and continue to shine the Light of Christ's Resurrection into all the world.

And to our beloved brother and sisters from Ukraine, many of whom are refugees throughout the USA, South America, Australia, New Zealand, Western Europe, and the Diaspora, we extend a special welcome and embrace. We recognize the immense challenges you have faced and the sacrifices you have made. As you find refuge in our parish communities, may you feel the warmth of our love and the strength of our solidarity. You are not alone, for we stand with you as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Having encountered the Risen Lord, like the disciples, we cannot keep the joy of the Good News, the New Life in Christ, to ourselves. We must go out to proclaim that Jesus Christ is the One who gives life and remember always that the victory of Pascha is not just a historical event, but THE living reality that NEVER ceases in transforming lives and bringing hope to the world.



With heartfelt prayers and Paschal blessings,

+Antony, Metropolitan

+Jeremiah, Archbishop

+Daniel, Archbishop