

# PATRIARCHAL PASCHA ENCYCLICAL

The Serbian Orthodox Church to her spiritual children at Pascha, 2021

## P O R F I R I J E

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!

*Come, on this auspicious day of the Resurrection, Let us partake of the new fruit of the vine of divine gladness and of the Kingdom of Christ, praising Him as God unto the ages.*

*(Paschal Canon, Ode eight, the first troparion)*

With these words, dear brothers and sisters, glorifying the Resurrection of Christ, the Church calls and gathers us to the pious paschal joy, the joy which surpasses and exceeds all of our earthly celebrations. The pious joy which the Lord has prepared for us is the joy of eternal Life, the eternal victory of Good over evil and the conquering of demons. The most wonderful John Chrysostom exclaimed in the festal delight: "Let no one today be afraid of death, for the Savior's death has made us free: it is extinguished by Him Whom it had held captive, Hades is despoiled by Him Who has descended into Hades, by receiving His Body Hades has been embittered."

The essence of this pious resurrection joy of ours is the Risen Jesus Christ Himself, Who gives Himself as a "new fruit of the vine" for us to drink. In the great and divine Mystery of His Body and Blood, He tells us: "Take, eat, this is my Body ...", and then: "Drink, this is my Blood of the New Testament ..." The Lord does not establish the New Covenant on some rites and religious rituals, rather, He establishes it in Himself through the eternal giving of Himself as divine Food and Drink.



The Lord suddenly changed our sorrow of Great and Holy Friday and Great and Holy Saturday, as we followed Christ the Lord from Gethsemane to Golgotha and brought us into the joy of the resurrection. It is, as the church poet says, a supremely special day! It is the day of Resurrection! It is the grace-filled power of the Resurrection that neither the sons of Israel, chosen by God, nor the wise Greeks could comprehend. The former said that the message of the Resurrection was "insanity", while the latter said that it was "madness". And precisely through the fact that for the former it was "insanity", and for the latter "madness", the Lord showed the greatness of divine grace and power. Knowing this experientially, let us rejoice, brothers and sisters, shouting to one another: Christ is risen! Truly He is risen!

The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, brothers and sisters and dear spiritual children, is the greatest event in the history of the visible and invisible world. That is why it is an unrepeatable event. The Resurrection is a new creation, and a new birth for man. Look, everything has become new! The God-man Jesus Christ rose from the dead and all previous "values" were overthrown, and a new world was created. Overwhelmed by the mystery of Christ's Resurrection, the Holy Apostle Paul testifies to what he knows and what is true: he testifies that, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old passes; behold, all things become new", and he adds, "And all things are of God, Who reconciled us to himself through Jesus Christ, and who gave us the ministry of reconciliation" (II Cor. 5: 17-18). It is that unexplored depth and height of the mystery of the Resurrection that the Holy Fathers of the Church write and sing about so much. The most important thing, brothers and sisters, is to know the depth and height of the mystery of the Resurrection, to believe in it and to be saved by it. Let us not allow the feast of the Resurrection of Christ to be a feast of customs, as we often hear, but a feast of new life, new hope, and new creation. It is to such celebration and joy that the Church invites us. On this Paschal Feast Day, the passing from death to true and eternal life, the Lord invites us to taste the "new fruit of the vineyard", that vineyard in which He is the Vine, and we are the

branches. The Lord created the world as a good vineyard. In His sermon on evil vinedressers, He says that the landowner plants a vineyard, and sets a hedge around it, digs a winepress and builds a tower, and hands it over to the vinedressers to cultivate. When the vintage-time drew near, the landowner sent his servants to bring the fruit of the vineyard. Seeing that the servants of the landowner were coming, the vinedressers, who in the meantime had turned into robbers and usurpers of God's giving, "took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another." In the end, the landowner sent his son, saying, "They will respect my son." Instead of respecting him, they seized him, took him outside and killed him. This is exactly what we saw on Good Friday: unjustly condemning the Lord, they crucified Him.

We have just passed the horror of Good Friday, when we watched the murder of the Heir of the Vineyard on the Cross; here we are today in the joy of the new Vineyard, in the joy of the new Life. The time of the true Vine and the real Vineyard has come. Therefore, all of you, come and taste the vintage of the new Vineyard and see that the Lord is good and gracious! This is the new joy with which all of us piously rejoice as we exclaim: Christ is risen! But with us rejoice all Christians, and all those who experience God's goodness, and all of God's creation. We invite you, dear spiritual children, to the joy of the Resurrection in order to drive away from us the sorrow of our life, the sorrow that has oppressed us for more than a year, the sorrow that has moved into every pore of our lives, the sorrow that has closed many houses. Let us rise and rejoice, and shout triumphantly to one another: Christ is risen!

With this joyful Paschal greeting, Christ is risen! We greet all of you, dear spiritual children, who live all

over the world, you who are far from your homes, from your homeland, and often from your loved ones. Know that your Saint Sava Church constantly cares for you as inseparable parts of our people and living members of the Body of our Church. We leave you a vow, before the Risen Lord and His saints, to preserve and strengthen first our internal church unity, and then national, linguistic and cultural unity. Do not allow time and circumstances to divide and separate you from each other, and thus from the Mother Church! Despite the fact that you are constantly under certain pressures, which cause disagreements and disputes among you, we pray to the Risen Lord that in the Risen One you may find the strength for your unity and virtue for your fraternal



harmony. We appeal to you to always keep before you the wonderful examples of faith and patriotism of our glorious ancestors and our great people who, living in a distant world, amazed the world in the persons of Tesla, Pupin and many others. Let us be worthy heirs of their names and their great deeds, their example and character! Today, in our prayers, we especially remember our afflicted brothers and sisters in Kosovo and Metohija. We especially greet them and encourage them to be firm and steadfast in faith, hope and love. The crucified and Risen Christ the Lord is with you, dear spiritual children, sons and daughters of Kosovo and Metohija. All the Serbian people are with you, all the Orthodox peoples of the world are with you, all righteous and truth-loving people are with

you. Perhaps nothing has so strongly united the Orthodox Christians of the world as Kosovo and Metohija, a symbol of dignity, honor, and a just struggle for a free life on the ancestral homesteads and resistance to power and injustice. Let us sing with the Holy King David: God is with us, understand the nations and submit yourselves, for God is with us!

We also greet all the faithful sons and daughters of proud Montenegro with Christ is risen! We address them especially with these words: our love and our prayers are with you, dear spiritual children, because you are in special circumstances, or better to say, unforeseen events and troubles, in constant spiritual struggles. May the Risen Lord Christ be for you, as before, the unshakable Foundation of your faith, your unity and communion with all your brothers and sisters, both in Montenegro and in Serbia and around the world. May the prayers and blessings of the great ones of God, the saints and miracle workers, Vasilije of Ostrog, Petar of Cetinje and all the saints, accompany you and be with you in all your struggles for the victory of Good over evil, Love over hatred, Unity over division, Holiness over the hatred of spiritual desolation.

We wholeheartedly greet our brothers and sisters in the Republic of Srpska and Bosnia and Herzegovina, in Croatia, Slovenia and Northern Macedonia. We have no doubt that you, dear spiritual children, with your archpriests, priests, monks and nuns, will welcome and celebrate the great feast of Christ's Resurrection in the best possible way, with open hearts towards your non-Orthodox or non-Christian neighbors. May the Risen Christ the Lord be with all of you and with all the people of good will around you!

Our thoughts and prayers are offered and sent these days to all the sick, and especially to those infected with the Covid-19 virus, as well as to

all doctors and medical staff, who are selflessly risking their lives, fighting to save those suffering from the Corona virus and other diseases. Brothers and sisters, all the nations of the world, from East to West, and from North to South, have been struck by this vicious and dangerous disease caused by an invisible virus. Last year, we hoped that the infection would pass quickly.

Unfortunately, not only did it not pass, but this year it continued to harass us around the world. Today we pray for the healing of all the sick, as well as for the repose of the souls of all those who have passed from this life. Respecting the recommendations of medicine, let us commit ourselves, and each other, and our whole life to Christ our God!

With the prayerful wish that you all welcome and celebrate Pascha, the Feast of Feasts, in spiritual joy and bodily virtue, we greet you once again with the most joyous greeting:

Christ is Risen!



Given at the Serbian Patriarchate in Belgrade at Pascha 2021. Your intercessors before the Resurrected Christ:

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

**PORFIRIJE**

Metropolitan of Dabro-Bosna **CHRYSOSTOM**

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 Western Europe **LUKA**

Bishop of Zicha **JUSTIN**

Bishop of Vranje **PAHOMIJE**

Bishop of Sumadija **JOVAN**

Bishop of Branicevo **IGNATIJE**

Bishop of Zvornik-Tuzla **FOTIJE**

Bishop of Mileseva **ATANASIJE**

Bishop of Budimlje and Niksic **JOANIKIJE**

Bishop of Düsseldorf and Germany **GRIGORIJE**

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 Bihac-Petrovac **SERGIJE**

Bishop of Timok **ILARION**

Bishop of Nis **ARSENIJE**

Bishop of Buenos Aires and South Central

America **KIRIL**

Bishop of Australia and New Zealand

Metropolitanate **SILUAN**

Bishop of Dalmatia **NIKODIM**

Bishop of Osek-Polje and Baranja **HERUVIM**

Bishop of Zahumlje and Hercegovina **DIMITRIJE**

Vicar Bishop of Moravica **ANTONIJE**

Vicar Bishop of Remezijan **STEFAN**

Vicar Bishop of Mohac **ISIHIJE**

Vicar Bishop of Diokleia **METODIJE**

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**