

2021 PASCHAL ENCYCLICAL - HIS GRACE BISHOP SILUAN

TO ALL THE CLERGY, VENERABLE MONASTICS AND BELOVED FAITHFUL, OF THE GOD-SAVED SERBIAN ORTHODOX METROPOLITANATE OF AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND - CHRIST IS RISEN! TRULY HE IS RISEN!

Dearly beloved spiritual children in the Resurrected Lord,

Gathered on this Holy Paschal night in our sacred churches across Australia and New Zealand, anticipating the approaching Dawn of the New Day, the Lord's Day - by which mankind sitting in darkness will see a great light (Mt. 4, 15-16), let us follow the hymnography of our Holy Church and cleanse our senses so that we may see Christ shining in the inaccessible light of the Resurrection, for He announces to us great joy! (The first Ode of the Paschal Canon).

Indeed, brothers and sisters, without the Feast Day of Christ's Holy Resurrection it would be impossible to speak of joy in this world; we would not have a grace-filled experience of true and impassable joy which can only be attained through a life in Christ, in His Holy Church.

A world without Christ, without the Victory of the Resurrection, is a place full of sorrow, anguish and horror! When we observe the world around us, and alas, often within us, we are struck with fear by the simple thought of what life would be like without the Resurrection of Christ. What consolation would we have in a world full of suffering, disease and death? In fact, the resurrection of Christ is the most necessary, most essential victory in the world of mankind, it is the birth of the Great Sun, that illumines the darkness of fallen humanity, dispersing all the phantoms and ferocious tormentors of the spirit of man.

Therefore, the Holy Church in its hymnography calls the Feast of the Resurrection - Holy Pascha, i.e., the Holiest Passage and Way out of the cruelty and corruptness of the fallen world - a world devoid of holy grace, into a world of grace-filled meaning,



into a world of joy, comfort and life in abundance (Jn. 10.10).

Having this truth before us, dear brothers and sisters, whenever it is difficult, whenever we are pressured by our burdens and temptations, when the world tells us that there is no way out, that everything is terrible and hopeless, let us turn to Christ our Saviour, who even though having confirmed that there will be trouble in the world, as well as many sorrows, encourages us not to be fainthearted and fearful, as He has overcome the world! (Jn. 16, 33). That victory becomes our very own through a grace-filled life in the Church, which St Justin Popovic testifies to when he says: "The Godman, as true God, had the power to save human nature from sin, death and the devil, and as true man - to give that salvation to the people in His Holy Church, in His Theanthropic body. By becoming sons of God through faith in the Only Begotten Son of God, Lord Christ, men become His co-members and partakers of His omnipotent blessings (Cf. Ephesians 3, 6), by which they overcome every sin, every death, every devil, and gain the strength to live life eternal whilst still here on earth and for life eternal."

We are not surprised that the fallen world cannot see the

significance of the Resurrection, because in the words of the Holy Apostle Paul "the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2, 14).

The notion of the Resurrection is scandalous to fallen humanity - to people who exclusively observe and order their lives according to a horizontal biological perspective.

Such a person has no room for God, for heavenly values, for categories of eternity, for his fellow neighbour, because he has spiritually narrowed himself down, spatially reduced himself.

That is why it is imperative for us to continually seek God, to rinse our eyes with the blessed life of faith, in order for us not to become permanently blind to the presence of God within us and the world around us.

On this Paschal night I would like for us to join in giving thanks to the Lord for all His blessings in these testing times, most notably for sustaining us on His Path, for not allowing our churches to become void of faithful; but on the contrary, by His grace, our Parishes and Monasteries are recording a significant rise in church attendance throughout our Holy Metropolitanate.

The Serbian people are well aware of the proverb: "there is no temple of worship without hardship". We are truly blessed for God's solicitude for us.

Let us also prayerfully remember this Holy Pascha our beloved brothers and sisters in Kosovo and Metohija who, by the grace of God, and their presence on this hallowed Serbian land, keep alight the oil lamps of our most sacred Altars, of which

we in the diaspora also draw strength and light.

We pray for all who are ill, for those who are suffering throughout the world. For all who are exposed to any harm or danger, and for those who give themselves unreservedly for the wellbeing of others. May the Lord bless all abundantly.

We also pray that this Pascha becomes a source of spiritual strength

and renewal for us, to help us forgive one another, to resurrect our relations. This is the Way of Christ, and that of His Apostle among the Serbian people – St. Sava.

Greeting all of you, my dearly beloved spiritual children, I wish you a blessed and grace-filled Pascha, with an abundance of strength and spiritual joy!

Christ is Risen! – Truly He is Risen!

Given in Sydney, On Pascha
2021

+ S I L U A N
Bishop of Australia and New
Zealand
The Serbian Orthodox Church