



**Χριστός Ανέστη!
Αληθώς Ανέστη!**

المسيح قام! حقا قام!

**CHRIST IS RISEN!
INDEED HE IS RISEN!**

**Христос воскрес!
Воистину воскрес!**





Office of the Bishop

312 Garfield Street

Johnstown, PA 15906

PASCHA ARCHPASTORAL LETTER

To the Very Reverend Protobishops, Very Reverend and Reverend Fathers, and the Faithful 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 every 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 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 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



St. John the Baptist

125th
Anniversary Celebration

September 9-11, 2022

You are cordially invited!

Save the Date!

Come Home!

Join us!

Thomas Ward
1974



ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST
Orthodox Church

PASTOR

VERY REVEREND
FATHER MICHAEL T. CHENDORAIN

CLERGY

FATHER DEACON GREGORY BENC

CHOIR DIRECTOR

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An Orthodox Christian community of the American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese of the USA under the protection of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.

WELCOME!



We Welcome All of Our Families, Friends and Guests who have joined us in worship this Paschal Morning.

PASCHA BULLETIN

Sunday, April 24, 2022

Epistle: Acts of the Apostles 1:1-8 * Gospel: St. John 1:1-17

SCHEDULE OF BRIGHT WEEK DIVINE SERVICES

SUNDAY, APRIL 24

THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD GOD & SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST!

9:00AM FESTIVE DIVINE LITURGY OF THE RESURRECTION followed by Festive Anointing with Oil and the Kissing of the Cross.
Afterwards: Procession and Blessing of Paschal Foods on the Church Lawn, followed by Parish Pascha Dinner in the hall. Please join us!

MONDAY, APRIL 25

BRIGHT MONDAY – THE SECOND DAY OF PASCHA

9:00AM Paschal Divine Liturgy with Festive Anointing followed by a Solemn Procession & reading of the Four Resurrection Gospels.

FRIDAY, APRIL 29

BRIGHT FRIDAY – THE SIXTH DAY OF PASCHA

9:00AM Divine Liturgy for April Perpetual Commemorations (2nd half) -
George Sr & George Jr Dzyak, Kuchtyak Family, John & Anna Sepelyak, John & Anna Dankovich, Bibko Family, John Vesely, Ann & Michael Barabos.

SATURDAY, APRIL 30

BRIGHT SATURDAY – THE SEVENTH DAY OF PASCHA

5:00PM Saturday Evening Vespers.

SUNDAY, APRIL 31

ST. THOMAS SUNDAY - THE EIGHTH DAY OF PASCHA

9:00AM Holyday Divine Liturgy with festive anointing.

SCHEDULE OF WEEKLY PARISH ACTIVITIES

MONDAY, APRIL 25

5:00PM Weekly Soup Kitchen Service — *Come lend a hand!*

PASCHAL GREETINGS

CHRIST IS RISEN!
CHRISTOS VOSKRESE
CHRISTOS ANESTI!

INDEED HE IS RISEN!
VOISTINNU VOSKRESE!
ALEITHOS ANESTI!

COMPACT WEEK

No fasting following Pascha. Meat may be eaten all during Bright Week!
Bon appetit!

NO KNEELING IN CHURCH

for prayer or for any reason until the Feast of Pentecost, Sunday, June 12th.

PASCHAL

HOMILY

On the seeking of the living among the dead.

'Why do you seek the living among the dead?' (St. Luke 24:5)

The angel of God asks the myrrh-bearing women, as if in wonder: 'Why do you seek the living among the dead?' This witness of God and His power was seeming to say: How could you for one moment imagine that He could be death's booty? Do you not know that He is the Source of life? Do you not know that all life is through Him and that no living creature can borrow a single drop of life from any other source? Did He not show you clearly enough on earth His power over live and over death? Who gave life to the dead Lazarus? Who withdrew life from the barren fig tree?

Oh, my brethren, let us stop seeking the living among the dead. If any of us is still doing so, let him stop the soul destroying task. It is a vain task, one for Jews and pagans, not for Christians. We know that the Lord, the giver of Life, is not in the tomb but on His throne of glory in heaven. Sin and virtue both govern the spiritual sight of man and reveal to him the whole of their realms, held in opposition one to another. Sin turns the eyes of the spirit earthward and reveals the realm of corruption; virtue turns the eyes of the spirit heavenwards and reveals the realm of immortality, and the risen Christ as King of that realm.

Oh, my brethren, let us seek life, not of creation but of the Creator. And let us not commit the even graver sin of seeking the Creator in the created tomb or the radiant Immortal One in the darkness of death.

O Lord Jesus, Conquerer of death, we sing to You: raise us also up to eternal life from corruption and darkness of death. To You be glory and praise forever. Amen.



PRAYER LIST

His All Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew, Metropolitan Gregory, Fr. John & Pani Eleanor Pribish, Helen Hrehowsik, Chrissy Santalla, Bill Kobasz, Helen J. Dunham, Olga Medvigy, John & Suzanne DiBiasi, Lynn Beres, Maryann Dudash, Eleanor Aleksza, Judith Raskoshin & newborn daughter, Jenna Quinn & Newborn Son, Kristy Stallard & unborn Son, Frank Ello, Lia Gogoladze, Dacia Snider, CPL Michael Delcher, Joann Kolator, Irene Tobin, Olga Mitko, Sandy DiLeo, Pani Eleanor Herbert, Michele Camisa, Abigail Billy, Joseph Santalla, Sussi Howard, Amanda Orender, Helen Deliman, Melanie McHenry, Peggy Patrick, Lillian Kalog, Maryann Della Serra, Victoria Dean, Stephen Skasko, George Kratsashvili, John Paul Hall, Veronica Houser, Joshua Skoog, CPL Logan Grguric, PO Daniel Langner, Smn. Daniel Birthisel, the unborn children of this world and for more vocations to the Holy Priesthood. *May the Our Risen Lord touch them all with the brilliance of His Glorious Resurrection and have mercy on them! Amen!*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

In the event of an emergency or if you are admitted to the hospital, please call Father at the rectory (732) 826-4442 as soon as possible and at any time. His mobile number is (201) 486-2123. If he is not available, please call Fr. Andrew Fetchina (732) 382-8844 and he will be glad to assist you.

DEEPEST GRATITUDE is expressed to the following workers of our church: Adele Baluk, Deb Gandy, Steve Gallant, George Hanas, Maryann Hudak, George Maslow, Stash Raskoshin, RoseMarie Smisko, Rich Szetala, Stephen Wythe, Caeleb & Ethan Chendorain, for cleaning/resetting the church after the tile work and changing altar covers in preparation for Holy Week. *May the Risen Saviour Bless them all with His Life-Giving Peace for many happy and blessed years!*

DEANERY CAMPING WEEK: July 24-30. *All of our youth are encouraged to go - even if they don't want to!*

BLESSING OF GRAVES will take place on Saturday, May 07. A Panachida will be offered at 9:00AM at the Cross Shrine (Old Cemetery) in memory of all those buried in our cemeteries followed by the New Cemetery. Family members of those present will be blessed first and then the remaining graves will follow. If you are not able to make it that day, and would like to be present, please schedule a time with Father at your convenience.

MANY, MANY THANKS and HEARTFELT APPRECIATION is extended to Scott Roman for his generous donation towards the cost of the new tile work in the Sanctuary and Nave of the Church which was completed last week. This beautiful addition to the church proper is a tremendous boost to the beauty of our church and will compliment the new rug which will be installed over the summer in preparation for the 125th Anniversary. **May Our Risen Saviour grant to His servant, Scott and his family, peace, health and happiness for many blessed years! Na Mnohaja i Blahaja L'ita! Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen!**

*“For the Son of Man also came not to be served but to serve,
and to give His life as ransom for many” (Mark 10:45)*

My Joy,

In the forty days of the Great Fast we venerate over the course of its weeks the icon of “Extreme Humility”. This icon of Christ in solitude is shown as Him descending into a grave or shown wearing the robes of mockery holding the reed with which he was struck as He was mocked. The icon is one where His face is marked in sadness, the colors are subdued and the aura is somber. This icon is a daily reminder of the sacrifice that Christ made once and for all, but that we re-visit each and every year in the liturgical cycle of the Church.

All men are born and die. Christ, however, was born of the Virgin Mary for the sole purpose of becoming the King of our hearts and souls and restoring the communion that was lost in our fall from grace. (JN 18:35) For that to happen He must die, or rather offer up His life as a ransom for many. (cf MT 20:28) The Author of Creation bore the weight of the entire creation on His shoulders and paid the ultimate price for our sins. (Isaiah chapter 53)

Was the quantity and quality of what He did for us really worth the price? Did He get what He paid for?

Today, we know the price of everything. We have access to an overabundance of information through technology that allows us to spend countless hours finding the best (cheapest) price on items we wish to purchase. Value on the other hand, is a different story. Value is plainly the worth in usefulness or importance to the possessor; its utility or merit. We determine that calculation and what we are willing to pay for the good or service we desire. When we buy cheap, we tend to regret that decision for a myriad of reasons. But, when we really splurge on something, we are usually pleased at the joy or convenience that it brings. Price and value go hand in hand.

Christ did no less for us on the Cross. He spent everything He had to purchase us back from our slavery to sin. He made the blind to see, the lame to walk, the deaf to hear, the sick to be made well and even the dead to rise. For that He was despised and hated, so much so that He was nailed to a cross. Jesus valued our salvation and eternal life restored that He was willing to pay with His life - “greater love has no man...” (JN 15:13) He did not go cheap, He did not skimp, He did not look for the best deal ... He took the only deal that was available to Him.

So the question to ask ourselves today, in fact, every day, is “Did Christ get what He paid for?” Having traversed the course of the Great Fast and arrived at the empty tomb once again, was Christ’s sacrifice worth the price He paid? Did we commit ourselves to improving our relationship with Him through prayer, fasting, almsgiving and reading of scripture? Was our attendance at church services more than just Sundays? Did we simply abstain this Lent or did we actually fast? Did we make time for Him as He makes the time for us? The answers to these questions are for us as individuals and we must ask them of ourselves on a regular basis.

The price was death and the real value was in our salvation and eternal life.

My prayer for all of us on this glorious day of Christ’s Resurrection is that we recognize the value of Christ’s extreme humility in the ultimate price that He paid for us all, and that we daily work to repay the debt. May the Risen Saviour continue to bless you and this parish until He comes again. I remain,

Your servant in the vineyard,

Father Michael



Liturgical Donations for the Feast of the Resurrection

ALTAR FLOWERS

*In Memory of +Mucisko & Sokolowski Family Members,
offered by Dan and Deborah Mucisko.*

*In Loving Memory of +George Smisko,
offered by RoseMarie and RoseAnn Smisko.*

ALTAR CANDLES

*For the Health of Courtney, Stephanie, Ashleigh, Grace,
Althea and Mia, offered by Stephen Gallant.*

ICONOSTASIS FLOWERS - CHRIST

*In Memory of the +Departed Members of the Hudak Family,
offered by Maryann Hudak.*

ICONOSTASIS FLOWERS - THEOTOKOS

*In Memory of +Beloved Wife Sue Gray,
offered by her husband George.*

ICONOSTASIS FLOWERS - ST. NICHOLAS

*In Memory of +Metropolitan Nicholas,
offered by RoseMarie and RoseAnn Smisko.*



ICONOSTASIS FLOWERS - ST. JOHN

*In Memory of +George & Irene Zakutansky,
offered by Maryann and Ernie Delcher.*

TETRAPOD FLOWERS

*In Memory of +Fenic & Smisko Family Members,
offered by RoseMarie and RoseAnn Smisko.*

TETRAPOD CANDLES

*In Memory of +Departed Family and Friends,
offered by The Wythe Family.*

WINDOW VIGIL LIGHTS - CHRIST

*In Memory of +James Hrehowsik,
offered by his son, Jim.*

WINDOW VIGIL LIGHTS - THEOTOKOS

*In Memory of +Skokan & Bergenstock Families Members,
offered by The Skokan Family.*

ETERNAL VIGIL LIGHT

*In Memory of +Stephen & Anne Gallant,
offered by The Sarno Family.*

LARGE PROCESSIONAL CROSS WREATH

*In Memory of +Nicole Kuzma and Robert Rathbun,
offered by The Kuzma Family.*

SMALL PROCESSIONAL CROSS WREATH

*In Memory of +Beloved Parents Charles & Mary Bendas,
offered by their son, Mark.*

BREAD FOR HOLY COMMUNION

*In Memory of +John Billy, Jr.,
offered by The Billy Family.*

WINE FOR HOLY COMMUNION

*For Good Health and Abundant Blessings of the Faithful,
offered by Pete and Lori Fenenic.*

CHARCOAL & INCENSE

*In Memory of +Beloved Sister Annette DiForti,
offered by Deb Gandy and Dee DiForti.*

BASIL BREAD FOR MIROVANIJE

*In Memory of +Timothy Petersen,
offered by The Petersen Family.*

*For the Health and Wellness of Helen Hrehowsik,
offered by her Grandsons, Matthew & Joseph Santalla.*

BULLETIN SPONSOR

*In Memory of +Maslow & Kachur Family Members,
offered by George Maslow.*

*For Health and in Remembrance of Our Departed Loved Ones,
offered by the Mularz Family.*

ADDITIONAL FLORAL DONATIONS

*Adele Baluk * Lisa Carfagno * Suzanne DiBiasi
Patricia Dudash * Frank Ello
George Hanas * Helen Hrehowsik
Lynn James * George Maslow
RoseMarie Smisko * Gerard Weir*

Floral Donations for the Feast of the Resurrection

*In Memory of +Beloved Husband Oleg Alber,
offered by his adoring wife, Diane.*

*For the Health of The Alber, Dori, Fryc and McHenry Families,
offered by Diane Alber.*

*In Memory of +Subdeacon Michael & Mary Zolar and Eduard,
Natalia & Anatole Alber, Vera Lazarew and Oleg Alber,
offered by Diane Alber.*

*In Memory of +Parents William and Pauline Beres,
offered by their daughter, Lynne.*

*In Memory of +Grandparents George and Mary Thomas,
offered by Lynne Beres.*

*In Memory of +Grandparents Michael & Mary Bendas,
offered by Patricia Billig*

*With Fervent Prayers for Ukraine,
offered by Patricia Billig*

*In Memory of +George and Mary Hronich,
offered by Ann Camp.*

*For the Health of the Bulko and Parrella Families,
offered by Michael & Lorraine Bulko.*

*In Memory of +Parents & Grandparents of the Bulko Family,
offered by Michael & Lorraine Bulko.*

*For God's Blessings upon Ukraine,
offered by Michael & Lorraine Bulko.*

*In Memory of +Irene & George Zakutansky,
Helen Stofega & Peter Dudas, offered by Jim & Barbara Cobb.*

*In Memory of +Parents Rose & Vincent DiForti,
offered by their daughters Dee DiForti and Deb Gandy.*

*In Memory of +Beloved Sister Annette DiForti,
offered by Dee DiForti and Deb Gandy.*

*In Memory of +Beloved Husband Edward Ello,
offered by his adoring wife, Cindy.*

*For the Health of His Granddaughters Grace & Althea Turco and
Mia Goedtel, offered by Stephen Gallant.*

*In Memory of +Beloved Parents Stephen and Anne Gallant,
offered by Stephen Gallant.*

*For the Health and Welfare of his Family,
offered by Stephen Gallant.*

*In Memory of +Grandparents Mitro & Mary Bliskun and
Mitro & Anna Horochovic, offered by Robert C. Horochovic.*

*In Memory of +Departed Members of the Yacina Family,
offered by Louis Kolamatis.*

*In Memory of +Departed Members of the Kolomatis Family,
offered by Louis Kolamatis.*

*In Loving Memory of +Gerdy Rybnicky,
offered by Scott & Sandy (Rybnicky) Kunes.*

*In Loving Memory of +Albert Rybnicky,
offered by Scott & Sandy (Rybnicky) Kunes.*

*In Loving Memory of +Joan Kunes,
offered by Scott & Sandy (Rybnicky) Kunes.*

*For the Good Health of Joe Kunes,
offered by Scott & Sandy (Rybnicky) Kunes.*

*For the Good Health of Robert, Jan, Grant,
Jenna and Elizabeth Rybnicky,
offered by Scott & Sandy (Rybnicky) Kunes.*

*In Loving Memory of +Parents John & Mary Homusiok,
offered by Eileen Luongo.*

*In Memory of +Lucas & Deverin Family Members,
offered by Joan Morrison.*

*In Memory of +Beloved Husband Raymond Morrison,
offered by Joan Morrison.*

*For her Health and Well-Being,
offered by Joan Morrison.*

*In Memory of +Parents Charles & Mary Horochovic,
offered by Patricia A. Miner.*

*In Memory of +Dimitri, Elizabeth & James Ello,
offered by Betty Ello Roman.*

*In Memory of +Anna Billy,
offered by Great-Grandsons Matthew & Joseph Santalla.*

*In Memory of +Richard Pratscher,
offered by RoseMarie Smisko.*

*In Memory of +Beloved Parents John & Susan Popadin,
offered by The Weir and Popadin Families.*



Christ is Risen! Can there be any doubt of that reality?!

On Pascha, even though all of us were unable to gather physically to celebrate the Resurrection, the day really did feel different didn't it? There were no reminders on the morning news that it was Pascha for millions of Christians in the world. There were no icon parades down the street. There were no late night Paschal celebrations at the Church until 5:00 AM. Yet despite all of that, Pascha Sunday still felt special! The air was different. The sunshine felt more radiant. Even when I shouted Christ is Risen in Slavonic to the family of turkeys that roam our Church property, they responded joyously! All of creation knew that Pascha Sunday is a day that was set apart from all the rest! It isn't just a Holy Day...it is an experience...that can only be

brought on when God rises from the dead.

We all heard those beautiful and incredible words from St. John Chrysostom last week when he said: *Christ is Risen, and Hell is overthrown. Christ is Risen, and the demons are fallen. Christ is Risen, and the angels rejoice. Christ is Risen...and LIFE reigns.* It hit me this past week, in what is appropriately called in the church "Bright Week", how much we NEEDED "Life to reign" in the midst of

telling us how the Disciples hid themselves in the upper room out of sadness and fear of the authorities, many of them perhaps feeling just like we have felt all of Great Lent: A little bit broken and overwhelmed.

In all of these examples, all it took for their dispositions and doubts to change, was Christ's presence among them! His presence transformed our weeping patroness Mary Magdalene into a disciple with unbounded joy, which

We Are No Longer "Waiting for Pascha"...Now What?

the darkness of this pandemic. Pascha has proved once again, perhaps this year more than any, that for those that have tremendous faith: Christ's Resurrection changes EVERYTHING!

This whole week, we heard in the Gospel lessons about how the presence of the Risen Christ truly changes and transforms us as human beings. Before Christ made his appearance after His crucifixion, we read about St. Mary Magdalene, who was filled with grief and doubt that her master was dead. We heard about the two travelers on the Road to Emmaus who were in despair, because their great deliverer had been crucified. The Gospel for St. Thomas Sunday begins by

eventually led her to shed all fear in life and proclaim the Risen Christ in Rome (in the audience of Caesar Himself!)

Christ's presence transformed the hearts of the two travelers on the road to Emmaus. After not recognizing that it was Christ who had appeared and spoke to them, they asked themselves: "Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the scripture to us?" I felt that same way when reading the Paschal Homily last Sunday. Even to reading to an empty Church, when I heard those glorious words, I too felt like a fire had been lit in my heart, that has continued to carry me even to today!

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NO LONGER WAITING ... continued

This is what Christ's presence...even in the very words that we read about Him...does for us!

Look what His presence did to the Disciples who were locked in and afraid to open the door! They went from broken and disheartened, to strong, confident, and bold lions of faith! They sang, rejoiced, healed, and taught the masses, and they did it not just for a few days after the resurrection, but for the rest of their lives!

We have spent all of Great Lent in isolation, hanging onto three words that (at least for me) offered a daily reminder of hope: "Wait for Pascha". Now, just as our hearts have been transformed with the palpable presence of Christ...we need to transform those three words as well. We go from **waiting to experiencing**. We go from **anticipation of the Light to be being bathed in Glory**. We transform the words "Wait till Pascha" to: **"Christ is Risen!"**

This is most definitely not the Pascha we all wanted. Each of us no doubt craved being with one another as we went around the Church with our lit candles, singing "Thy Resurrection O Christ our Savior." We so desperately wanted to hear those first few verses of St. John's Gospel in all of those different languages from throughout the world. Priests everywhere would have given anything to hear everyone in their parishes shout the response to His proclamation that "Christ is Risen!" (It's so hard to do that to an empty Church!).

No one in the world got the Pascha that they wanted...but we all got the Pascha that we so **desperately needed**. Now, we carry that light on with us, not just for 24 hours...not just until the Kielbasa is gone from our baskets...not just until Ascension or Pentecost...but for the rest of our lives, all while shouting those glorious words of truth: **Christ is Risen!**

Fr. gabriel bilas

- PASCHA -

The Resurrection

"Hell rules the race of mortal humans, but not eternally; for when You were placed in the grave, O powerful One, You tore asunder the bars of death by Your life-creating hand and proclaimed true deliverance to those sleeping there from the ages, since You, O Savior, have become the first-born of the dead." (Pascha Nocturnes)

God warned Adam that should he choose to eat the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, he would die (Genesis 2). God never said death was a permanent or an eternal punishment. While Death claimed all humans, its power came to an end when Christ died and descended to the place of the dead. Christ raises all the dead, bringing a permanent end to death's reign over humanity. This is the Good News Christianity proclaims to the entire world's population.

None of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. (Romans 14:7-9)

Despite the Good News and tragically many still choose death. Some think war is the answer to human evils – that we can defeat evil, Satan, death by killing those who we believe are evil. Some think death is the only way to escape the world and they choose it for themselves and sometimes for others.

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(PASCHA - THE RESURRECTION. ... continued)

Some are trapped in their own thinking and believe their own death or the death of some around them are the only way out of the box that imprisons them. Orthodoxy sees death as an evil – separation from God. Christ tramples down death by His own death and shows us the way to remain united to the Source of Life even through suffering and death.

“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth.”

*“Blessed indeed,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!”
(Revelation 14:13)*

Orthodox bless the graves of their deceased loved ones after Pascha because we do believe they are alive in Christ – they are blessed. Christ made it clear that those who we consider dead and buried are alive in God when He said:

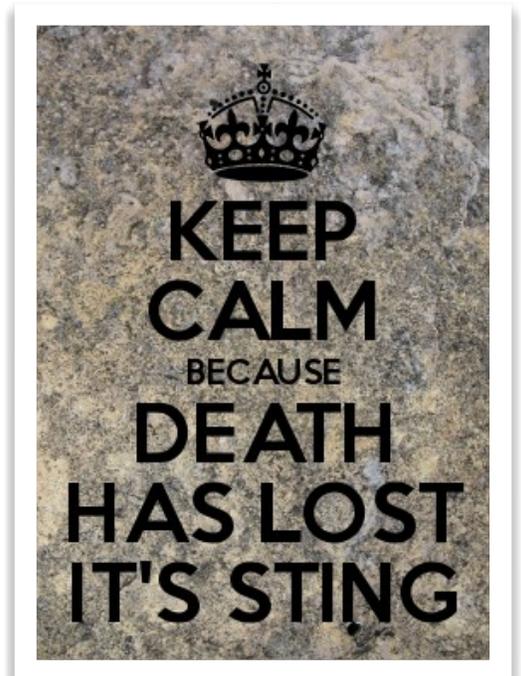
“And the fact that the dead are raised Moses himself showed, in the story about the bush, where he speaks of the Lord as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Now he is God not of the dead, but of the living; for to him all of them are alive.” (Luke 20:37-38)

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob died long before Moses came along, yet God speaks about them not in the past tense – I was their God – but as being their God now because they are still alive in Him.

*“This is the day of resurrection. Let us be illumined by the feast. Let us embrace each other. Let us call “brothers” even those who hate us, and forgive all by the resurrection, and so let us cry: Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life.”
(Pascha Matins)*

There is no more joyous day for humanity than Pascha. We are baptized into Christ’s death and raised from the dead with Him to eternal life. Consequently, we can embrace everyone for death has no more power over any of us. Death cannot separate us from our God or from those we love. Death remains the sign that something is wrong with this world. In Christ we find our way to triumph over death and to remain united to the Giver of Life.

The last enemy to be destroyed is death. (1 Corinthians 15:26)



CHRIST IS RISEN! INDEED HE IS RISEN!

The Tradition of the Easter Egg

One of the most symbolic and beautiful Easter customs is the practice of preparing, giving and eating Easter eggs.

The real enjoyment of the Easter eggs comes only when we fully realize the symbolism in connection with Easter. The egg itself is a symbol of the resurrection. While being dormant, it contains a new life sealed within its walls. The idea of the egg as a symbol of fertility and of renewed life goes way back to the time of the ancient Egyptians and Persians who had the custom of coloring and eating eggs during the spring festivities.

One of the earliest known uses of the egg in religion was in connection with the Egyptian Sun-god Ra. The interpretation was that the shell represented the Earth, the white represented the heavens, and the yolk represented the Sun, Ra. The Egyptians colored the eggs red because it was the closest color they had to the color of the sun.

The ancient idea of the significance of the egg as a symbol of new life readily became the symbol of the Resurrection of Christ to the people of the early Christian Church. In Christianity, the Easter egg represents the sealed tomb in which the Precious Body of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ was placed after His Crucifixion. The shell is the sealed tomb having dormant life within its walls.

Tradition tells us that the custom of the Easter egg had its start with Mary Magdalene. After the Ascension of Christ, Mary Magdalene went to the Emperor of the Roman Empire and greeted him with the words: "Christ is Risen!" as she gave him a red colored egg. With this introduction, she then began to preach Christianity to him.

In the early days of the Christian Church, only red was used in coloring the eggs. Red signified the Sacred Blood which was shed on Calvary by Our Lord Jesus Christ. Other colors have gradually come into common use.

Light colors such as white, ivory or tan represent the fine linen cloth in which Christ's Precious Body was wrapped before being placed in the New Sepulcher. The color green represents the fresh vegetation of springtime, the awakening of the Earth from the deep slumber of winter.

Blue represents the heavenly blue of the skies, the peace and joy of the Easter season. Yellow represents the starlight of the early morning of the Resurrection, and the devotion of the myrrh-bearing women to Christ. The color purple represents the passion of Christ crucified.

Multicolored eggs represent the time when Jesus yielded up the Spirit, "and the veil of the Temple was torn in two, the Earth quaked, and the rocks rent and the graves were opened, and the bodies of the Saints which slept arose."

The many colors of the different eggs together represent the beautiful hues of spring time which join Christendom in the rejoicing of the Resurrection of Christ. The many colors and sweet-smelling odors which are also traditionally mixed in with the egg dyes are in remembrance of the myrrh-bearing women, who early on that first Easter morn went to anoint the Precious Body of Christ with myrrh and sweet-smelling spices and perfumes.

At the conclusion of the Easter Divine Liturgy in the Eastern Orthodox Church, colored boiled eggs are blessed and distributed by the Priest to the congregation. Thus everyone receives a personal blessing of the Feast.

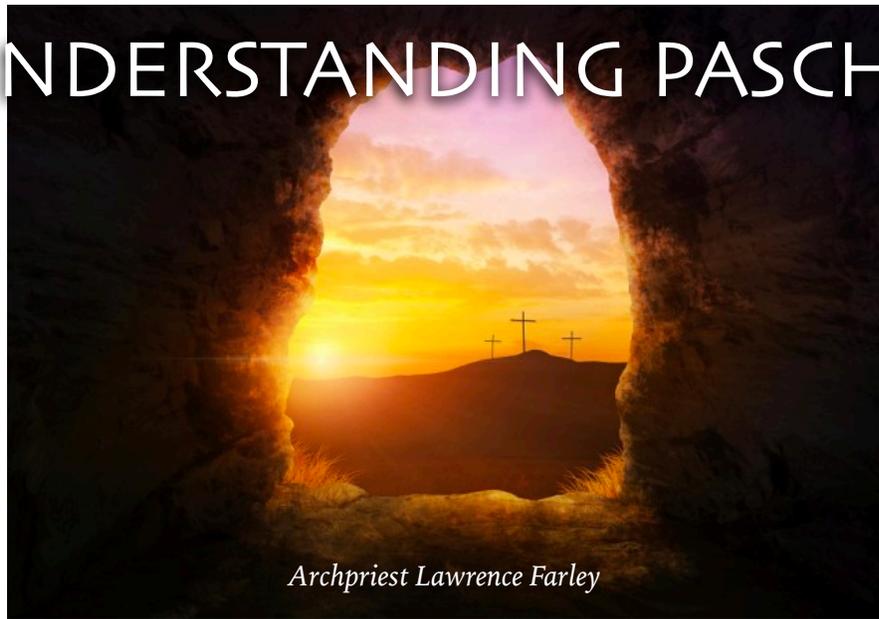
The faithful then go about greeting one another and hitting the eggs together. Upon the cracking of one of the eggs, the beautiful greeting: "Christ is Risen!" is told by the one whose egg is cracked, whereupon the other replies, "Indeed He is Risen!"

The cracking of the egg meant the seal of the tomb is broken and Christ is Risen!

No egg of the Feast should remain unbroken to symbolize emphatically that Christ has conquered death and is risen, thereby granting new life to all believing Christians. †

UNDERSTANDING PASCHA

In recent months I have come to the conclusion that the best place to understand the significance of Pascha is in a cancer ward, or a hospice deathbed. When these terrible places reveal the truth to each of us, the world tells each of us that we are a race of immortals, destined never to die. Surveying our surroundings in these places reveals that this is not so.



Archpriest Lawrence Farley

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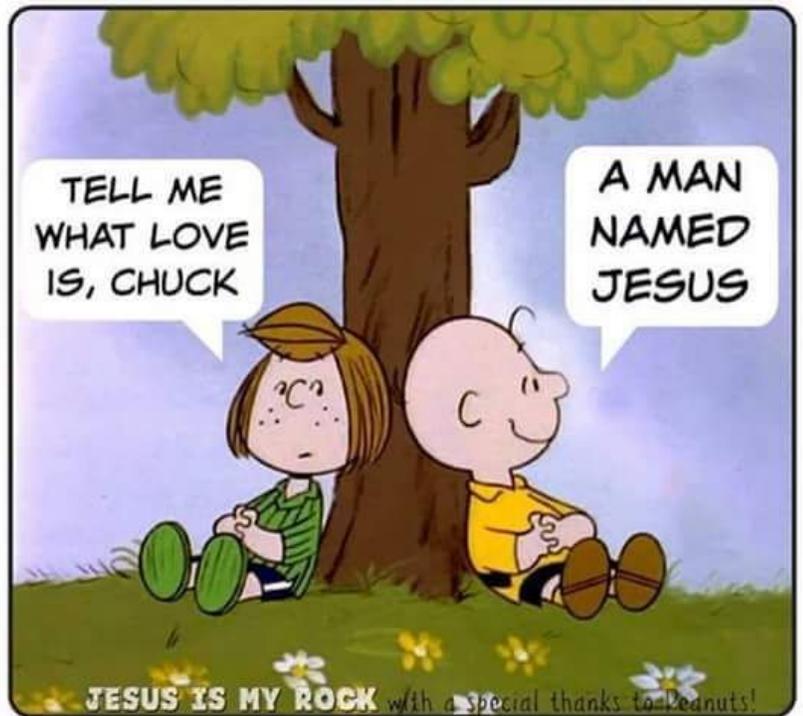
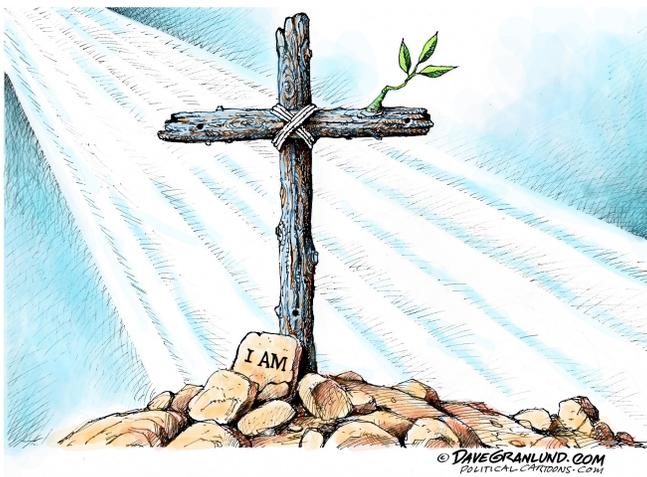
Both the cosmetic industry and the funeral industry conspire in their own ways to persuade us that we will remain young and wrinkle-free forever, and our media cheerfully picks up and conveys this message. We know, of course, that it is nonsense, but we buy into it anyway. Youth is celebrated and culturally portrayed as if it is eternal, and the dead are rarely allowed to be seen. People expire privately in hospital rooms, and then are rushed down to the morgue. Funeral directors (there are happy exceptions) do their best to anesthetise the survivors to the horror that is death, and often the corpse is cremated before the funeral (now renamed the “celebration of life”). Often in of these services, the corpse is not present, and if it is, the casket is usually closed. Our forefathers chanted, “In the midst of life we are in death” (the line is from the grave-side service in the Anglican prayerbook), but no longer. In the midst of life we now rarely encounter death. In the old days, people died at home, and were prepared for burial by their loving and grieving family. Now we have people for that.

All of this culture of denial falls away from us when we survey our surroundings in cancer ward, hospice, or by the deathbed. Whether or not we die of cancer, all of us will die. It reminds me of the old children’s riddling rhyme: “Doctor, doctor, will I die? Yes, my child, and so will I.” Our cultural denial notwithstanding, we are not a race of immortals, and all of us will one day lie upon our deathbeds. As a priest, I have stood by a few of them. And then one realizes afresh what Pascha really means.

Pascha is not simply a liturgical feast, something celebrating the end of a rigorous Great Lent. And it is not simply the happy historical ending to our Lord’s life, an appendix added after the crucifixion saying, “And they all lived happily ever after”. Pascha is God’s promise that the moment of pain we endure by the deathbed is not the final word. For now we must be submerged in the horror and obscenity of death, but God’s plan is indeed for us to be a race of immortals, and one day this plan will be fulfilled. Hurling down the years to our deathbed is not a journey to oblivion but to joy. When death’s cold hand finally closes our eyes, we will open them in paradise, and after our body returns to the dust from which it was taken, it will one day arise and be raised and transformed. Pascha is not simply about Christ’s happy ending, but about ours.

If one disbelieves in Christ and Pascha, then our cultural of denial of death makes good sense. We can’t do anything about the fearful fate which awaits us, so why think about it? Eat, drink, be merry, and watch television. But if what the Church says about Christ and Pascha is true, we don’t need the lies or the denial. We can look death in its fearful face and smile and say with St. Paul, “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” Death may prowl the cancer ward or the hospice and may roar at us as we lie on our deathbed, but it will be gone soon enough. Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life.

ACCORDING TO TRADITION, AFTER THE CRUCIFIXION AND RESURRECTION OF CHRIST, SAINT MARY MAGDALENE WAS BROUGHT IN FRONT OF THE EMPEROR OF ROME IN THE PRESENCE OF A LARGE CROWD. ST. MARY BEGAN TALKING TO CAESAR ABOUT THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST. SHE PICKED UP AN EGG FROM THE DINNER TABLE TO ILLUSTRATE HER POINT ABOUT THE RESURRECTION. CAESAR WAS NOT CONVINCED AND REPLIED: "THERE IS MUCH CHANCE OF A HUMAN BEING RETURNING TO LIFE AS MUCH AS THERE IS A CHANCE FOR THE EGG THAT YOU HOLD TO TURN RED" IMMEDIATELY, THE EGG MIRACULOUSLY TURNED RED IN HER HAND! IT IS BECAUSE OF THIS TRADITION THAT ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS EXCHANGE RED EGGS AT EASTER.



We Await the PASCHAL SERVICE All Year...

The Paschal service is special; there is no doubt about that. It is always distressing that this service can pass by in a single moment, as quick as lightning. The Paschal service appears on our life's horizons quickly, illuminating our mind and feelings, and then disappears from sight. Then once again we await Pascha. We await it all year round, and all Great Lent.

At the end of the eighties I had not yet been Baptized, and I was just beginning to turn to faith and go to church. An acquaintance of mine from the institute was a believer who attended the Church of the Resurrection Slovusheye by Uspensky Vrazhek [in Moscow]. It was under her guidance that I took my first steps towards the Church.

I remember my first Pascha. Nearly all beginning Christians find church service to be a serious labor. This service was very long and, due to my ignorance, mostly incomprehensible. With great difficulty I managed to stand until the end of the Paschal Matins, and then it "turned out" that there was still the Liturgy ahead. It was a real trial! During the Paschal liturgy, as is customary in many old churches, they read the Gospel in several languages, none of which I knew at all. I stood there trying very hard to penetrate the meaning of what was going on. It is surprising that, having neither experience of prayer nor understanding of the church service, I was profoundly and deeply impressed.

One could say that this was just a new "cultural discovery" for me. But, however new a cultural event may be, it is still a run of the mill thing for a secular man. One cannot experience one and the same work of art all one's life; one way or another the impression pales beside later cultural developments. The impression from my first nocturnal Paschal service has stayed with me forever (although, to be honest, I must confess that I stepped into the yard a few times to rest a little). It is so bright that if I close my eyes I can still see Metropolitan Pitirim standing on the cathedra and the distinguished priests reading the Gospel in various languages.

It seems to me that one's first impression from a Paschal or any other festal service is very important for one who has just started going to church, because it provides a supply of spiritual energy for many years to come. It is human nature to grow used to things, and this is why it becomes ever more difficult to preserve the same heartfelt, prayerful feeling during an ordinary everyday or Sunday service as one had had at the beginning of one's conversion. However, we have only ourselves to blame if what goes on in church becomes routine: we are unable constantly to urge ourselves to concentrate and pray warmly. If a person has ever had a lofty spiritual feeling during a church service, this recollection helps him to return to the soul's needs during his day-to-day routine.

continued on next page ➤

(WE AWAIT ... continued)

In the course of time I started attending another church, the Church of All Saints in Krasnoe Selo. I was a regular parishioner for about five years, and it was mainly there that I acquired my experience of the spiritual life. I went to this very church for all the Paschal services. Characteristic of the services there was, first of all, that they were very long. The Paschal Liturgy ended toward the morning. We went home around seven in the morning. It seemed to me then that it could only be this way; but, naturally, I had to get used to it, to train myself, and this was no easy matter, because of my unchurched past. I still live on the spiritual energy supply I received then.

The service was done entirely according to the Typikon. The canon was sung in this way: the canon verses were repeated several times. Some were skeptical: why repeat the same thing over and over again, during the service and every day? The service according to the Typikon shows why the repeating elements of the service are necessary. The repetitions make the divine truths, the content of the divine service, remain firmly in the mind of the worshipper, captivating his mind and feelings, becoming a part of his being. Then the content of the service becomes understandable, inherently your own, something not imposed on you, but innate.

For a beginning Christian, if he is young and healthy, one simply needs to try to humble oneself, to bear the pain in one's feet, the fatigue. In time it will all become natural and easy. It goes without saying that it is more difficult for a more mature or elderly person. These church services were, for me then, not only filled with spiritual content, but were also educating me.

You can simply stand for an hour or two during a normal service, but when it lasts for three, four hours and more, you are already no longer waiting for it to end. Like it or not, you get involved in what is going on. Although a simple worshipping parishioner does not normally sing or perform anything, if he pays close attention to the service he becomes a participant. This is one of the main tasks of a parishioner during the Liturgy, that is, Divine service in common.

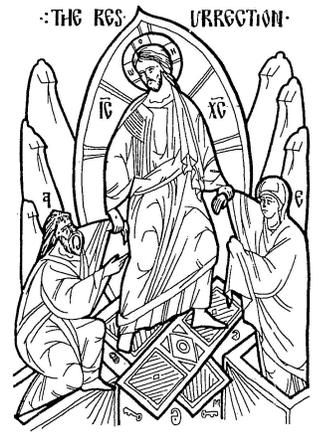
The Paschal service is special; there is no doubt about that. It is always distressing that this service can pass by in a single moment, as quick as lightning. The Paschal service appears on our life's horizons quickly, illuminating our mind and feelings, and then disappears from sight. Then once again we await Pascha. We await it all year round, and all Great Lent. All the waiting is condensed in the moment they start singing the stichera in the altar: "Angels in the heavens, O Christ our Savior, praise Thy Resurrection with hymns..." The Paschal service starts, and it will be over in just a few hours, and then once again we wait for it to happen again. May God grant that this very waiting be the most important one for us, and not the tormented expectation of something earthly and transitory, but rather the expectation of Christ's Pascha as a clear witness of that for which we all strive: the Kingdom of Heaven.



FR. DIMITRY TURKIN

Χρῖστος Ανεστη!
Χρῖστος Βοσκρεσε!
Christ is Risen!

Αλειθος Ανεστη!
Βοιστινυ Βοσκρεσε!
Indeed He is Risen!



On the Glorious Feast of the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ, we extend prayerful best wishes for a blessed Pascha and humbly ask that the Risen Saviour bestow His Life-Giving Peace upon all of the following:

- ✦ His All-Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch +BARTHOLOMEW I and the Holy See of St. Andrew.
- ✦ His Eminence Archbishop +ELPIDOPHOROS.
- ✦ His Grace, The Most Reverend Metropolitan +GREGORY, our Diocesan Shepherd.
- ✦ The Very Reverend Protopresbyters, the Very Reverend and Reverend Fathers of Our Diocese.
- ✦ Our Deanery Clergy; Very Reverend Dean Father Andrew Fetchina, VRev. Father John Pribish, VRev. Fr. Robert Lucas, VRev. Father John P. Fencik, Reverend Father John Cmur, Reverend Father Kenneth Ellis, Reverend Father Konstantin Gavrilkin, Reverend Father Matthew Stagon, Fr. Protodeacon Gregory Benc, Sub-deacon Alex Breno, Reader Ben Pribish.
- ✦ All the Monks and Nuns, Deacons, Sub-deacons, Readers and Seminarians of our Diocese.
- ✦ The pious faithful of our American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese.
- ✦ The Officers and Trustees of our Parish Council, presided over by Stephen Wythe.
- ✦ The Members of our St. John's Choir and its Director, Professor George Hanas.
- ✦ The dedicated Sunday School Teachers of this parish.
- ✦ The Members of St. John's PTO who provide phenomenal assistance to our Sunday School Teachers and the parish in general.
- ✦ The loyal, pious and dedicated Knights of the Altar; Nicholas Benc, Andrew Billy, Caeleb and Ethan Chendorain, Richie Kuzma, Zachary Mucisko, Adriancko & Erik Tomacek and Matthew Santalla
- ✦ The Members of our "Baking Crews" who continue to provide for the material means of this parish through their "labor of love".
- ✦ The Members of our St. John's Soup Kitchen who faithfully live out the Gospel of Christ in caring for "the least of His brethren".
- ✦ The Sick of this parish, who especially this day need our prayers.
- ✦ ALL of our Parishioners who have faithfully and selflessly worked, donated and prayed this past year to ensure the success of this parish.
- ✦ The children of this parish who are a blessing from God for each and every one of us.
- ✦ The newest members of our Parish Family who have made this parish their home for worship.
- ✦ Our Families, Friends, Guests and Neighbors who have come to worship at our church with us: all throughout the year and especially on this day.
- ✦ All the members of our armed forces who are serving at home and abroad protecting our freedom especially our very own Corporal Michael Delcher.
- ✦ And...all Orthodox Christians, especially those suffering persecution and those who are held in captivity, who today celebrate the Good News of the Resurrection - that "Christ is Risen! "Indeed He is Risen!"

“He is Risen!”

“He is not here!”



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