



The Serbian Orthodox Church to her spiritual children at Pascha, 2009

PAVLE

By the grace of God

Orthodox Archbishop of Pec, Metropolitan of Belgrade-Karlovci and Serbian Patriarch, with the 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!
INDEED HE IS RISEN!

*“Let us call ‘Brothers’ even those who hate us’
and forgive all by the resurrection.”
(Paschal hymn)*

This year as well during these spring days, dear brothers and sisters, with the same joy we celebrate the greatest Feast Day of God’s Church, the Resurrection of Christ the Savior. Every year at this time, when the mysterious force of life awakens deadened nature, the glory of the Resurrected Lord awakens even in us a brighter, more holy and happier life. Today exalted thoughts spring forth, wonderful feelings are born, and a holy and extraordinary disposition overcomes us. With the resurrected Lord we also are raised up into a higher and more meaningful life. The victorious bliss of eternal life given to us by our Resurrected Redeemer and Savior shines forth in our hearts. Just as in that mysterious beginning at God’s Word the world was called into existence, and in the world life, so in like manner by His Divine power the Son of God, Jesus Christ, resurrected from the dead. This great event is mystical as is the creation of the world; it is miraculous and exalted as a real song of joy resounding throughout all God’s creation. Moreover, as the fulfillment of the first creation and as a new creation, it is even more miraculous and greater than the first creation and than all historical events.

Many centuries separate us from that bright Jerusalem dawn, when the holy Myrrhbearing women beheld the empty tomb. They came to anoint the dead body of their Teacher; to pour their tears upon it and to warm up the cold stones of the grave with their love, their faithfulness and devotion. They were at the cross of the Crucified Savior when all, except His Mother and one of the disciples, forsook Him. Even from a distance they followed the last moments of the greatest Teacher. They did not forsake Him even when He died. That is why they were made worthy to be the first witnesses and the first messengers of the Resurrection; the first celebrants of the new life in the Resurrected Lord. Today the tender admonition uttered to the women by the Lord’s angel from the stone at the tomb resonates in our ears: “Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, He is risen!” (Luke 24:5-6) And the frightened women, there in the garden where the tomb was, were the first ones to meet the Resurrected Lord. He sent them to Galilee to tell the disciples and to gladden them with the joyous news that they too would see Him (cf. Mark 16:7). And behold, dear children of God, this Resurrectional joy of ours today comes from that meeting with the Resurrected Lord, Who resurrected for us and instilled the joy of new life in all His followers and all the confessors of His Divine knowledge.

In the same way, the centuries separate us from the twilight of that Jerusalem day when the Resurrected Lord appeared to His followers, Cleopas and the other disciple. Frightened, they were hurrying from Jerusalem to Emmaus, so as to hide because of fear of the Jews. Even though they were not as courageous as the myrrhbearing women, they were made worthy of meeting with the Resurrected Lord. He hid His former image so that they could not recognize Him. But when He left them after a conversation about that which had taken place in Jerusalem and after the breaking of the bread, they confessed to one another how "their hearts were burning" while He was with them (cf. Luke 24:13-32). That same holy flame that burned in the hearts of Christ's two disciples on the road to Emmaus burns even today in us as we celebrate this Feast of Feasts, as we too experience a spiritual meeting with the invisible Vanquisher of death. That same fire warmed and warms God's Church in every period of her history. Did He not Himself say: "I have come to send fire upon the earth" (Luke 12: 49). That same holy fire warmed our ancestors and enlightened their lives in the dungeons of other centuries. They lived without homes for a long time, without homesteads, without freedom, in extreme insecurity, without possessions and property, as do many today who have been forced to leave their homesteads, but always with faith in the resurrected Lord, with the faith in the victory of justice and truth and with faith in the resurrection.

Furthermore, long centuries separate us from that first resurrectional evening, when the Resurrected Lord for the first time appeared to His frightened and disappointed disciples, and uttered a greeting of encouragement: "Peace be unto you!" (John 20:19). In an instant He returned peace to them, resurrecting their faith in Him and in His Divine dispensation. If the Son of God did not rise again, the history of Christianity would have been finished with His last words on the Cross: "It is finished!" (John 20:30). But He did rise again, and in the name of that truth His disciples joyfully gave up their lives for Him. Bearing this great truth, His Church has gone into victorious battle throughout the world, that without shedding blood she may conquer her numerous armed-to-the-teeth enemies.

"Why do you seek the living among the dead?" (Luke 24:5), the angel of the Lord admonished the holy Myrrhbearing Women who came to the tomb, as you have heard. They came to the tomb thirsty for truth and eternal life. And today millions and millions of spiritually impoverished and morally ravaged people, enthralled with the grandeur of passing things, live in this world as in a cold tomb. Is the world not becoming a factory and a market place of false brilliance and passing values? Is it not often said today that a man can walk peacefully upon this earth without heaven? It is as if contemporary man has climbed the heights of his Babylonian tower, confident in his own knowledge, but he is often petty, selfish, aggressive, and full of evil intentions that threaten his tower and his survival. We are afraid that this our civilization will too late remember Christ's words: "Without me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

Our Savior became man so that we might become divine. He was willing to die on the cross in order to save mankind from their sins. He rose again from the dead in order to give us eternal life. He made death just another event in life – a life that knows no end. When Pilate judged the Savior, he had neither the spiritual strength nor the elevated mind to recognize in Him the Son of God. Despite all of this, the beauty of the human image of the suffering Savior could not be hidden before his eyes as he pronounced his sentence: "Behold, the man!" –to Jesus' accusers (John 19:5). With this he attempted to influence, as much as possible, the conscience of the insensible murderers of Christ. He believed that His human brilliance would waver some of them.

We pray to our Resurrected Lord that in us may be resurrected the image of the original human nature, which today oftentimes is distorted, masked and smeared with numerous faults and sins. We pray that in us everyone may recognize people enlightened with His eternal life, be they wealthy or poor, be they in a great or small position or place. Our time is currently faced with a material crisis, but we currently face a greater crisis, that of morals and character. We will rejoice if everyone who looks upon us can say: Here is a man! – so that everyone, friend or enemy, judge or accuser, may identify in us a true and authentic human being. Let us, dear brothers and sisters, preserve our human dignity, which was so exalted by our Resurrected Son of God. Let us preserve faith in the Resurrected Lord, love towards our neighbors, and truth and justice; a love towards everything good for which people yearn, but which without the help of the Resurrected Lord and His Gospel is not achievable. Let us pray to the Resurrected Lord and let us implore Him, as did the two disciples who traveled on the road to Emmaus, to stay with us. Let us pray

that we may rejoice in Him; that we may draw strength from Him; that we may be spiritually raised on high, so that we may not be overcome and carried away by the muddy floodwaters of our times.

Conveying this our message to all of our brothers and sisters, and most especially remembering today our faithful in Kosovo and Metohija, as well as our faithful worldwide, on all continents where Serbian Orthodox and all Orthodox Christians today celebrate the Resurrection of Christ, we, your Patriarch and all the Hierarchs of the Serbian Church, greet you with the greeting of Joy and New Life,

Christ Is Risen!
Indeed He Is Risen!

Given at the Serbian Patriarchate in Belgrade at Pascha 2009.
Your prayerful intercessors before the Risen Lord:

Archbishop of Pec,
Metropolitan of Belgrade-Karlovci and
Serbian Patriarch PAVLE with all the hierarchs of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

Metropolitan of Zagreb and Ljubljana JOVAN
Metropolitan of Montenegro and the Coastlands AMPHILOHIJE
Metropolitan of Midwestern America CHRISTOPHER
Metropolitan of Dabro-Bosna NIKOLAJ

Bishop of Sabac-Valjevo LAVRENTIJE
Bishop of Nis IRINEJ
Bishop of Zvornik-Tuzla VASILIJE
Bishop of Srem VASILIJE
Bishop of Banja Luka JEFREM
Bishop of Budim LUKIJAN
Bishop of Canada GEORGIJE
Bishop of Banat NIKANOR
Bishop for America and Canada of the New Gracanica Metropolitanate LONGIN
Bishop of Eastern America MITROPHAN
Bishop of Zica CHRYSOSTOM
Bishop of Backa IRINEJ
Bishop of Great Britain and Scandinavia DOSITEJ
Bishop of Ras and Prizren ARTEMIJE
Bishop of Bihac and Petrovac CHRYSOSTOM
Bishop of Osijek and Baranja LUKIJAN
Bishop of Central Europe CONSTANTINE
Bishop of Western Europe LUKA
Bishop of Timok JUSTIN
Bishop of Vranje PAHOMIJE
Bishop of Sumadija JOVAN
Bishop of Slavonia SAVA
Bishop of Branicevo IGNATIJE
Bishop of Milesevo FILARET
Bishop of Dalmatia FOTIJE
Bishop of Budimlje and Niksic JOANIKIJE
Bishop of Zahumlje and Hercegovina GRIGORIJE

Bishop of Valjevo MILUTIN
Bishop of Western America MAXIM
Bishop of Gornji Karlovac GERASIM
Bishop of Australia and New Zealand IRINEJ
Retired Bishop of Zahumlje and Hercegovina ATANASIJE

Vicar Bishop of Hvosno ATANASIJE
Vicar Bishop of Jegar PORFIRIJE
Vicar Bishop of Lipljan TEODOSIJE
Vicar Bishop of Dioclea JOVAN
Vicar Bishop of Moravica ANTONIJE

THE ARCHDIOCESE OF OCHRID

Archbishop of Ochrid and Metropolitan of Skoplje JOVAN
Bishop of Polos and Kumanovo JOAKIM
Bishop of Bregal and locum tenens of the Diocese of Bitolj MARKO
Vicar Bishop of Stobija David