



## **PASCHA ARCHPASTORAL REFLECTION** **OF THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS OF THE** **UKRAINIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE USA AND DIASPORA**

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

Dearly beloved Clergy, Monastics, Sisters and Brothers in PASCHA – THE RESURRECTION,

“Peace be with you!” Very dear to us in our Holy Orthodox Liturgical Tradition is this exclamation that our Lord offered to His disciples in His first meeting with them following His Resurrection (John 20:19-31). This Peace was accompanied by the revelation of the wounds on His Body, proving that He is the crucified One resurrected and alive. Thereafter, He commissioned His disciples, “as the Father sent me, so I send you” making them the Holy Apostles.

This offering of Peace was spoken to a fearful and shocked group of disciples who were comparing experiences in the aftermath of the Crucifixion and not sure what to make of the unbelievable news of PASCHA – the Holy Resurrection. This Peace our Lord offers to His troubled disciples was not the worldly peace they might have comprehended. It is a Peace – a gift from Heaven – that He offers as He breathes on them saying “Receive the Holy Spirit”, Who will guide you throughout all their Apostolic ministry. It is a Peace tied closely with the Grace imparted by the Holy Spirit into not only the Apostles in their ministry, but to each of us through the Holy Mysteries, as members of the Body of Christ – His Holy Church. It is a Peace that the world desperately needs today. It is a Peace that heals and brings new life.

This year, more so than in decades, Pascha prompts us to consider the costs of human folly and the devastating acts of the ongoing war - the massacre of our brothers and sisters in Ukraine. One cannot receive such horrific news without tears and fears. The feelings of great joy at the Feast of Feasts – the Holy Resurrection – and the sadness at the horror of our suffering brothers and sisters in Ukraine are difficult to reconcile, but the Peace offered by our Risen Lord gives us hope. Ukraine and her people, throughout history, have known so much violence, so much pain and almost incomprehensible genocide from the same aggressors who invade and violate them today. These usurpers of our history have never been able to erase our nation and people from the face of the earth – precisely because the Peace of our Lord has preserved them and their self-identity – at the depth of their souls.

Pascha also comes amid the still thriving Covid-19 pandemic, which has delivered, along with its human and economic ravages, a season of inspired soul-searching. It has created an enforced period of stillness among all of us. It has encouraged contemplation. Not least of all, it has inspired an assessment of what is vital and what is not. The Peace offered by our Risen Lord preserves us at the depth of our souls with sound faith in His desire to heal us both physically and spiritually.

There is no shame in admitting that it is a very challenging time to proclaim and live the Good News of the Resurrection of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The struggles we face are very real and complicated. We have good reason to feel confused! However, the message of Pascha comes to us loud and clear: Christ is Risen! The powers of sin and death have been defeated and always will be – even in this broken - and often frightening - world. This Pascha, in such a world, so much in need of hope and inspiration, the abiding sense of PEACE gifted to us enables us to embrace and trust God our Creator, Who will bring us through the difficulties we endure. As we celebrate our Risen Lord, let us be mindful that we also are commissioned as apostles of His Peace - not a peace won by strength and might, but one gained through our community worship and dependence upon God in the Holy Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We have the power, together, to be the living proof that the power of the Resurrection is all-encompassing and transcends even death itself. May you know the gift of PEACE always, with the power goal of sharing it with all around you each moment of your life. Never underestimate how deeply you can affect others with this Peace.

We embrace you all in the Peace, Joy, Light and Love of PASCHA and we assure you all that you are prayed for daily with a hope that is eternal. Let us all together assure all our brothers and sisters in Ukraine and around the world that they also are prayed for daily with that same hope. We love you with all our being...

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+ **ANTONY**, *Metropolitan*

+ **JEREMIAH**, *Archbishop*

+ **DANIEL**, *Archbishop*

