

PASTORAL LETTER
OF THE UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS IN CANADA
ON THE OCCASION OF THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD

Christ is Risen!
Indeed He is Risen!

“And He granted us eternal life...”

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ!

On that first Easter morning, the myrrh-bearing women went to the tomb of Our Lord to perform one more act of love: to complete the burial ritual—which was hastily performed owing to the approaching Sabbath—and to anoint Jesus’ body with aromatic spices.

As they approached the tomb, suddenly “there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightening, and his clothing white as snow.... The angel said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, he has been raised from the dead” (Matthew 28: 2-7).

And we, in turn, this Easter cry out with joy over and over again, “Christ is risen from the dead, trampling death by death, and to those in the tombs giving life!”

Life. New life. Resurrected Life.

This is the day of the Resurrection. Christ, our God, has brought us from death to life, and from earth to heaven. He who is the author of life could not be contained by the chains of death. Christ descended into the realm of death, and broke the bonds of those held captive there. He arose from the tomb on the third day.

We too were once dead, held spellbound by the sin of Adam and Eve, who dared to equate themselves with God. Having been expelled from Paradise, we were held ransom by death itself. O Christ, yesterday we were buried with you, but today we rise, resurrected with you. Yesterday we were crucified with you on earth, O Saviour. Now glorify us with you in your heavenly kingdom.

Jesus is the salvation of the world. And in saving the world, Jesus leads us back to life.

Life. New life. Resurrected Life.

Jesus, the Giver of Life, brought Adam and Eve back to life. And he leads us back to life, to immortal life, to eternal life. “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life” (John 3: 16).

And so, what should our response be this Easter to the saving-act of Our Lord, who endured his passion, crucifixion, and death upon the cross for our sake? He who pays the ultimate price with his own life that we may be freed from sin and death and inherit eternal life?

In our response, let us echo the words of Pope Francis, who writes in his letter, *The Joy of the Gospel*:

“I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them.

“The Lord does not disappoint those who take this risk; whenever we take a step towards Jesus, we come to realize that he is already there, waiting for us with open arms.

“Now is the time to say to Jesus: ‘Lord, I have let myself be deceived; in a thousand ways I have shunned your love, yet here I am once more, to renew my covenant with you. I need you. Save me once again, Lord, take me once more into your redeeming embrace.’

“No one can strip us of the dignity bestowed upon us by this boundless and unfailing love. With a tenderness which never disappoints, but is always capable of restoring our joy, he makes it possible for us to lift up our heads and to start anew.

“Let us not flee from the resurrection of Jesus, let us never give up, come what will. May nothing inspire more than his life, which impels us onwards!” (Evangelium gaudium, 3).

May the joy of the Resurrection grant you and your family new life, love and hope today, tomorrow, and for ever.

May the blessings of the Lord be upon you!

Christ is Risen!

Indeed He is Risen!

- + Lawrence Huculak, Metropolitan Archbishop of Winnipeg
- + Michael Wiwchar, Bishop Emeritus of Saskatoon
- + Severian Yakymyshyn, Bishop Emeritus of New Westminster
- + David Motiuk, Eparchial Bishop of Edmonton
- + Stephen Chmilar, Eparchial Bishop of Toronto
- + Ken Nowakowski, Eparchial Bishop of New Westminster
- + Bryan Bayda, Eparchial Bishop of Saskatoon