

**PASCHAL EPISTLE**  
**2012**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:  
Christ is Risen!

“It is the Day of Resurrection, so let us be radiant for the festival, and let us embrace one another”. United in the mutual love and joy of the Resurrection of Christ we greet each other with a holy kiss.

Like the sun which shines on all, the grace of Holy Pascha unites Orthodox people everywhere, wherever they may be in the dispersion, in big cities and in small villages, with one thought, one faith, and one bright hope, one triumphant hymn: “Christ is Risen!”

The once-risen Christ never dies, according to the Apostle (Rom. 6:9), and He also never ceases to resurrect each of us individually in the history of mankind, and we never cease to be resurrected with Him and in Him. Through His grace in these days of Holy Pascha, the curtain concealing His bright and Divine countenance from us sinful people is taken down, and He allows us to see Him clearly and touch Him as did the Apostles when He appeared to them during the forty days after His Resurrection.

With what trepidation we all await the first Paschal exclamation or Paschal bell-ringing which announces the arrival of the Feast of Feasts and triumph of triumphs!

How many people who are weighed down and broken in spirit by the burdens of life live only in hope for the day when at least for one moment heaven opens up and they can hear the ancient, yet always fresh and sweet hymn that Christ is risen from the dead! If for us this news of the Resurrection of Christ is the sweet “aroma leading to life”, then for the enemies of the cross of Christ it is the “aroma of death leading to death” (2 Cor. 2:16).

Nothing is more fatal to the enemies of the cross of Christ than the TRUTH of Christ rising from the dead. Therefore, do not

be surprised when they try with such persistence and bitterness to cloud the truth in the hearts of believers.

We can all see with what fury and rage today's "princes of the people", that is, the ranks of wicked people in power both in Russia and in the so-called "free world", are allowed by God to rival the high priests and scribes of ancient days as they strive anew to kill the Savior of the world and seal him in the tomb under guard, but "it is hard to kick against the pricks (goads)" (Acts 9:5), spikes used to prod farm animals, meaning that it is futile to fight against divine truth. The Galilean always defeats his opponents, foiling all their destructive schemes.

Let all Orthodox people, whose souls are greatly filled with reproach from the arrogant and contempt from the proud (Ps. 122:4), bow their heads and let them draw strength from His glorious arising from the dead and victory over the powers of hell, and confirm their faith in His Resurrection.

Let us witness before the whole world our unshakable faith in the Resurrected Christ our God. Truly He is Risen!

+Joseph, Bishop of Washington