



**IRINEJ**

BY THE GRACE OF GOD  
BISHOP OF EASTERN AMERICA  
THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

Most beloved clergy and monastics, sons and daughters,  
faithful children of the God-protected Eastern American Diocese of our Holy Church!  
We greet you on this most radiant and most joyous Feast of Feasts –  
Christ's Resurrection from the dead, with the all-glorious,  
ever resounding and vivifying Christian greeting:

**CHRIST IS RISEN!**

Emanating from a paternal heart replete with Paschal joy, We join in proclaiming the triumphant victory of life and light over death and darkness, deeply inspired by the hymnography of Saint John of Damascus:

*O Christ, great and most holy Paschal!  
O Wisdom, Word and Power of God,  
Grant that we may more perfectly partake of You  
in the never-ending day of Your Kingdom!*  
(Paschal Canon—Song 9)

"Christ is Risen, my joy", exclaims St. Seraphim of Sarov, joining in the chorus of that reverberating proclamation of immeasurable Paschal joy, which is gone out into all the world. For Christ is Risen, indeed, my Beloved! This *great and most holy Pascha* has burst into our world, the world of time, space, and matter, of real history, real people, and real life! The *Wisdom, Word and Power of God* has destroyed death and darkness, as "the glory of God is man fully alive" in the words of St. Irenaeus of Lyon.

Yet, our minds and imaginations, it seems, cannot fathom the fulness of the Paschal Mystery, as we endeavor to fit the luminous and explosive fact of the Resurrection into the minute and fragmented possibilities we already know. While at the same time, contemporary society attempts to overshadow this victory of life and light by offering corruption as freedom, education void of illumination, and advocating false choices in life. "If so, then the end of the world is not before us, but behind us", prophetically warns the Holy Bishop Nicholai of Zhicha and Ochrid, "and humanity is not existing only in a Paradise lost, but in a Life lost too".

Take heed, for this very reason, the Holy Apostle Paul cautions us: "Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word, I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance:

that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures” (I Cor. 15:1-4). As such, our only goal, Beloved, is to be united in Christ, and become part of a stream, that converges into a forceful river uniting in Him and with Him in Whom alone lies the fulness, and with it the beauty of real freedom, truth and righteousness such as we have never known.

Our saintly Bishop Nicholai likens this image of a river to the community of our salvation. According to him, individuals are like a stream, which easily freezes in the winter; yet, we are as a mighty river, which continues to flow even in the dead of winter when we join one another. As a community, together, we become the iconic likeness of the Church. For we are members of the Body of the Risen Christ, which is the ark of our covenant and ark of our salvation. As the great Psalmist David sang: “The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in Him, and He helps me. My heart leaps for joy, and with my song I praise Him. The Lord is the strength of His people, a fortress of salvation for His anointed one.” (Ps. 27:7-8).

Analogous to the words of Bishop Nicholai, who preached in New York many years ago in 1921 to the then builders of contemporary society, concerning Christ as “the stone which the builders have rejected” (Ps. 118:22). He compares those who attempt to build a foundation for a mill by sinking their only large stone in the middle of a riverbed and constructing a mill with small stones found at the edge of the riverbank, which are easily carried away by the water. Then, as today, if such small stones are used in the construction of society, they too shall be taken by the flowing river. The one essential stone is the Crucified and Risen Lord – our only fortress, our corner stone and secure foundation.

Therefore, Most Beloved, to *more perfectly partake of Him in the never-ending day of His Kingdom*; let us rejoice in our common quest for the restoration of truth and righteousness with the plenitude of Christ’s Holy Church, our firm community and sure salvation, now, more than ever, from all our heart exclaiming:

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

Given at Pascha, in the Year 2023.

YOUR FERVENT INTERCESSOR BEFORE THE RISEN CHRIST,

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