

The Paschal Epistle of The Ukrainian Orthodox Bishops of Canada in the Year of our Lord, 2022

**To the Reverend Clergy, the Diaconate in Christ, and all the faithful of the
UOCC**

Christ is Risen!

It is the great joy of Pascha that brings us together today under the domes of these Holy Temples so that with one mouth and one heart we can proclaim "Christ is Risen!" "Indeed He is Risen!", thereby granting us eternal life. Beloved in Christ, today we joyfully greet all of you with the feast of Feasts and the Festival of of Festivals - the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The Resurrection of the Lord is the victory of good over evil, love over hatred, humility over pride, holiness over sin, peace over war. "This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it." (Ps.118:24)

The ultimate example of immeasurable sacrificial love is the love of God the Father, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) Our Lord Jesus Christ because of His great love "was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried" (The Symbol of Faith). Our Saviour opened a new life for us, with the words: "Love one another." This is the greatest of the Commandments, which we must not just confess, but also keep in our lives. It is impossible to live a joyous day without love, because "God is love!", And "love suffers long and is kind, love does not envy; love does not parade itself; is not puffed up; does not behave rudely; does not seek its own; is not provoked; thinks no evil; does not rejoice in

iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.” (1 Cor.13: 4-8) These are manifestations of love that we must create among ourselves, by following the example of Christ as created in the image and the likeness of God.

Today we truly declare that Christ “trampling down death by death, and those in the tombs, bestowing life”. Hearing these words, we not only understand that there is something beyond earthly life; we realize that the Lord gives us all eternal life. Christ becomes man in order for man to become God by Grace. Therefore, today is the Feast of Feasts, a celebration of victory of life over death; the feast of the victory of God's love over sin. Today is a day of great and incomprehensible joy. And so with the joy of Easter we will say to each other: “Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen”. May this joy of the Resurrection of Christ be in everyone's heart not only at the moment when we are at the Easter services, but may it be in our hearts throughout our lives.

Reverend fathers, dear brothers and sisters! This Pascha od 2022 will be remembered by many of us as the Pascha of great trials, set against the background of the war in Ukraine due to military aggression by Russia. "Greater love has no one than this, to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13). Out of sacrificial love for their native land and people, thousands of Ukrainian soldiers defend their Motherland. May the Holy Mother of God cover them with Her omophorion. On the day of His righteous judgment, may God grant the crown of immortality to those soldiers who laid down their lives for their people and for their native land. We pray for the innocent, peaceful victims of the terrible shelling and bombings throughout Ukraine, where the Russian occupier has brought suffering, weeping, pain, brutal violence, terror,

and death as in Bucha and Mariupol and other cities and villages of Ukraine. May the Lord grant them the Kingdom of Heaven and memory eternal! May the glorious Resurrection of Christ destroy all evil and give victory to Ukraine in this difficult time as she continues the fight against the cruel occupier. God is in the truth, not in power, and the truth is with us and Ukraine will definitely win, because God is with us!

His Beatitude Metropolitan Epiphany of Kyiv and All Ukraine and His Grace Bishop Ilarion of Edmonton recently signed an agreement on financial assistance for the humanitarian mission of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine. This information on how to help the Orthodox Church of Ukraine can be found on the website of UOC or the UOCC Facebook page, in a press release dated April 8. We sincerely thank you for your generous donations, which have already been made or will be made for our Church in Ukraine. May the All-Merciful Lord reward all of you for all the good you do!

In the Holy Gospel, we learn that the first greeting of our Lord Jesus Christ when He appeared to His disciples after His Resurrection was: "Peace be with you!" He repeated these words more than once and they have great significance. By His Resurrection, the Lord gives us the possibility for our sins to be forgiven, to be reconciled to Him, and through Him to attain peace and harmony with ourselves, neighbors and with all creation in the world. On this Easter of 2022, when Ukraine is going through the hardest trials since her independence, we turn to the Risen Lord to grant victory over the enemy and peace to the long-suffering people of Ukraine. With our collective pain and anxiety, we pray that our people may see the light of the Holy Resurrection

on their land in peace after the torments and sufferings they have endured are still are enduring.

Christ is Risen!

With Archpastoral blessings,

+ Ilarion

Bishop of Edmonton and the Western Eparchy,

Locum Tenens of the Metropolitan Cathedral

+ Andriy

Bishop of Toronto and the Eastern Eparchy