



## Holy Ascension Russian Orthodox Church

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### Christ is Risen!

*“Yesterday I was buried with Thee, O Christ; today I rise with Thine arising. Yesterday I was crucified with Thee; do Thou Thyself glorify me with Thee, O Savior, in Thy kingdom”* (Paschal Canon, Ode III)

Beloved Brothers and Sisters,

Hastening to church to participate in the Divine Services on the sacred and holy night of the Resurrection of Christ, we desire to be radiant for the feast and to embrace one another. *“Pascha the beautiful, Pascha the Lord’s Pascha. Pascha the all-venerable has dawned upon us. Pascha, with joy let us embrace on another”* (Paschal Stichera).

The Father loves mankind with such profound love that He *“gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life”* (Jn. 3:16). The Son suffers for our sakes: He is crucified, dies and is buried, and He rises again on the third day. His most-pure Body does not see corruption: and all of creation is overcome with the radiance of His Resurrection from the Dead. The living God becomes the First-Born from the Dead. Our Sweetest Jesus Himself tells us that if we believe in Him, we shall not die, but enjoy life everlasting.

Let us be initiated into the Mystery of the Father’s love. This means that we participate in the Mystery of the Cross and Resurrection of Christ, for as Christ says: *“I and the Father are one”* (Jn. 10:30).

The great and sacred events of the Crucifixion of Christ and His Glorious and Radiant Resurrection took place on separate occasions being three days apart; our Lord having been crucified and buried on a Friday and then having Risen from His Tomb three days later on a Sunday. But now, by virtue of the Holy Sacraments of Baptism, Chrismation, Holy Communion and Repentance these two Sacred Events, which have redeemed mankind from sin, corruption and death – hav-

ing once occurred separately by three days – take place within the soul and body of the pious believer simultaneously. This is the mystery, and it is crucial that we live by it.

No one can live without a cross. Even the unbelievers carry a cross and because of their disbelief in God and His providence suffer more than those who believe. For although everyone wants to participate in the Radiant and Glorious Resurrection, to experience eternal bliss and rest, not everyone accepts that the Resurrection comes through the Cross, as we chant *“for behold, through the Cross joy has come to all the world.”* Conversely, the Holy Apostle Paul says that we would be the most unfortunate of men – our crosses would be unbearable – if not for our faith in the Resurrection of Christ.

The Word of God became flesh and spoke His word. When we perform His word we incarnate the Word of God within us. Paradise is within us! The pain of the Cross dispels a man’s delusion. Concrete pain drives man away from dreaminess into sobriety. Sorrows are God’s gift bringing man to the reality of God’s goodness. Our cross seems terrible to behold. But, anyone who has borne his cross with faith will confess that its fruits far surpass its pain. Pain is overcome by the Power of God. Pain takes second place in such a life, as Eternal Joy is experienced in a Mystery. The impetus towards God in both pain and joy here in this temporal life, will continue in the coming unending day in endless motion without limits, without the least sigh of tribulation. The children of God cry out *“O great and most sacred Pascha, Christ! O Wisdom, and Word of God and Power! grant us more perfectly to partake of Thee, in the unwaning day of Thy Kingdom”* (Paschal Canon, Ode IX).

### Christ is Risen indeed!

Archpriest Paul Volmensky, Rector  
Pascha, 2021