

The Serbian Orthodox Church to her spiritual children at Pascha, 2011

## **I R I N E J**

By the grace of God

Orthodox Archbishop of Pec, Metropolitan of Belgrade-Karlovci and Serbian Patriarch, with the all the Hierarchs of the Serbian Orthodox Church – to all the clergy, monastics, and all the sons and daughters of our Holy Church: grace, mercy and peace from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, with the joyous Paschal greeting:

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

*“Christ is risen!  
He has destroyed death,  
Bringing eternal life”!*

Greeting you, dear brothers and sisters, with these words of eternal joy, in their light and immortal meaning, we, your hierarchs, witness before you and all people the great and holy truth of our Christian faith and our Orthodox Church. Enlightened by the light of Christ’s resurrection, we learn that on earth there are only two kinds of people, two kinds of faithful: those that believe in eternal life and who live by it and for it; and the other kind, those who worship death and nothingness. Every one of us, every day, every moment of our earthly life, should ask himself: to which of these two groups do I belong, to what kind of people do I belong? Do I belong to those who have recognized that they are eternal and immortal beings, or do I belong to those who believe that death and nothingness are their beginning and end, ultimately consuming all beings and all things? Am I in the community of salvation with those who already here on earth live with and for eternal life; or am I in that sad company of those ruled by death? That is why, among other things, such people restlessly hold on to transient life, worshipping – publicly and secretly – death and ephemeral matters...

We Christians are who we are because of our belief in life as the primary value and meaning of mankind’s vocation and because we bow down before eternal life and eternal light. In other words, we believe in Christ the Lord, Who conquered death, and with this we believe in the general resurrection of all and in the eternal life of all beings.

Here, once again we are enlightened by the eternal light from Christ's life-giving Tomb. Therefore, let us rejoice, brothers and sisters, because we are created and because we exist – not for death and nothingness, but rather for life everlasting and for eternity! Let us rejoice, because the Resurrected Christ has destroyed sin, death and every man-destroying demonic power! Let us rejoice, for He has abolished the darkness of death from human existence and He has abolished the darkness of ignorance from human minds and man's sight! Let us rejoice, for thanks to His Resurrection, darkness and death no longer reign in the depths of existence and creation, but rather eternal light and eternal life! Let us rejoice and celebrate that the history of the world and of mankind is no longer irreversible dying and disappearance, but rather a reality leavened with the yeast of eternal life!

Perhaps today more than ever before in history, people's faith and hope in eternal life are shaken. Believing in Christ's Resurrection, in the general resurrection of the dead and in life eternal, we actually believe that faith and human hope are inextinguishable, and that the meaning of life is undefeatable. With faith we become certain that, "above all this great commotion, the power of the supreme mind again reigns" (Njegos). Believing in the Resurrection of Christ, and confessing the Resurrected Christ as Lord and Savior, we believe in unending resurrection and the renewal of unconquerable human dignity.

Today human morality, shame and goodness are brought low and trampled upon because human conscience has been permeated with death and meaninglessness. Believing in the Resurrected Christ, in Him as the Way, the Truth and the Life, we believe in the regeneration and resurrection of human morals, shame and goodness. In our days the foundations of human culture are shaken and the goals of human work and creativeness are darkened. Only those who believe in Christ and see with their hearts His Resurrection, the general resurrection of the dead and the eternal meaning of created beings, recognize the unassailable roots of man's work and the unquenchable fountains of human creativeness and culture.

Today, selfishness, spiritual darkness, love of power and vain talk threaten to destroy the flower of unselfish love built into human nature, the love by whose flames all beings and all of creation are warmed; these vices then threaten to destroy the joy of life born from freedom, mutuality and self-sacrifice. Only the Resurrected Christ, Who entered our being and came to us — to serve, not to rule; to give and sacrifice Himself, not to sacrifice others to Himself — renews within us the ember of unselfish love, brotherly mutuality, service and self-sacrifice. Only faith in eternal life, shining from Christ's Tomb, burns up selfishness and self-love as false principles and a false way of life. Only the light from the Tomb reveals the eternal truth that self-sacrificial love towards God and neighbors, towards all created beings, is emancipation from all human deceptions and lies,

liberation from false living and carnal philosophy, salvation from all darkness and obscurity!

Selfishness and lack of integrity today – as they did yesterday, as they will tomorrow – are destroying every real communion, common good and possession. Lack of trust, greed, love of power, violence, and stealing afflict personhood and its God-given freedom. That selfishness, greediness and violence are that much greater if a man has not opened up his eyes to see his eternal dignity and the eternal expanse and view of his being – inasmuch as he is attached to earthly and transient treasure. Only souls enlightened by the light of Christ's Resurrection, renewed with hope in the general resurrection of the dead, souls restored with faith in a good that the moth does not eat away and rust does not destroy, are freed of selfishness, feelings of biological inadequacy, fear, greediness, stealing, and aggression. Permeated with eternity, richness and abundance of eternal life, sons and daughters of the Holy Church find a real measure for everything, and a balance between the temporal and the eternal; between that which we should serve and for which we should sacrifice, and that which is not worthy of man and his dignity, living and labor. To sons and daughters of the Church a great truth of Christ about life is clear: "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul" (Mark 8:36-37)

Truly, with Christ's Resurrection, as with faith in the general resurrection of the dead and life eternal, we learn to conquer – but not to conquer transient and limited earthly regions, but rather the eternal and limitless regions of God's love and goodness. With the Resurrected Christ, those who are lost receive the hope that they will be found; the sick that they will be healed; the unconsolated that they will be comforted; the dying that they will rise again; that mothers left without children will once again fill their arms and eternally hug their children.

In our time, the relationships between nations and individuals are affected by selfishness, mutual repugnance, aggression and hatred. The devastating and apocalyptic earthquake in Japan and similar natural occurrences of our time in the world remind us of human weakness, of the mortality and nothingness of human works. Obviously, spiritual and moral disorders in human society, as before, are accompanied with natural disasters, such as tsunamis. Aren't they new reminders to all mankind that truly there exists mutuality between the spiritual-moral state and natural phenomena? Events in nature remind us that the natural order of things depends on our human way of living. They remind us that man is responsible not only for himself and his people, but also for all people and nations, as he is responsible for all of God's creation.

It is to this responsibility that the light of Christ's Resurrection points, the light that enlightens all and everything, revealing the meaning of all events in time and of life in eternity. The Resurrected Christ, Who with His arms outstretched on the

Cross eternally embraces and enlightens with the Light of His Resurrection everything and everybody, with His Divine-Human love calls all people and nations to sacrificial love, mutual peace and brotherly forgiveness. His calling of all to eternal life, to forgiveness of everyone for everything, His forgiveness to all from the Cross and His giving of eternal meaning to everything that exists, to all events and all of history, warms us and resurrects the soul, renews the heart and permeates life with peace and joy. Christ's Resurrection brings back the God-given order and meaning to all of creation. It brings God back to people and people back to God. It brings people back to each other and it gives them a real way of existence and eternal meaning to living.

Therefore, forgiving each other with the Resurrection of Christ, and being held with an eternal embrace, let us sing with one heart and one mouth, and let us teach all people and nations to sing the song of eternal love and life:

Christ is Risen from the dead,  
Trampling down death by death,  
And upon those in the tombs,  
Bestowing life.

Let us sing, indeed, we and all people, this eternal song, and let us greet each other all-joyously, now and ever and unto the ages of ages:

**Christ is Risen!**  
**Indeed He Is Risen!**

Given at the Serbian Patriarchate in Belgrade at Pascha 2011.  
Your prayerful intercessors before the Risen Lord:

Archbishop of Pec,  
Metropolitan of Belgrade-Karlovci and  
Serbian Patriarch IRINEJ

Metropolitan of Zagreb and Ljubljana JOVAN  
Metropolitan of Montenegro and the Coastlands AMPHILOHIJE  
Metropolitan of Dabro-Bosna NIKOLAJ

Bishop of Sabac LAVRENTIJE  
Bishop of Zvornik-Tuzla VASILIJ  
Bishop of Srem VASILIJ  
Bishop of Banja Luka JEFREM  
Bishop of Budim LUKIJAN  
Bishop of Canada GEORGIJE  
Bishop of Banat NIKANOR

Bishop of New Gracanica – Midwestern America LONGIN  
 Bishop of Eastern America MITROPHAN  
 Bishop of Zica CHRYSOSTOM  
 Bishop of Backa IRINEJ  
 Bishop of Great Britain and Scandinavia DOSITEJ  
 Bishop of Bihac and Petrovac  
 CHRYSOSTOM  
 Bishop of Osijek and Baranja LUKIJAN  
 Bishop of Central Europe CONSTANTINE  
 Bishop of Western Europe LUKA  
 Bishop of Timok JUSTIN  
 Bishop of Vranje PAHOMIJE  
 Bishop of Sumadija JOVAN  
 Bishop of Slavonia SAVA  
 Bishop of Branicevo IGNATIJE  
 Bishop of Milesevo FILARET  
 Bishop of Dalmatia FOTIJE  
 Bishop of Budimlje and Niksic JOANIKIJE  
 Bishop of Zahumlje and Hercegovina GRIGORIJE  
 Bishop of Valjevo MILUTIN  
 Bishop of Raska-Prizren TEODOSIJE  
 Bishop of Western America MAXIM  
 Bishop of Gornji Karlovac GERASIM  
 Bishop of Australia and New Zealand IRINEJ  
 Retired Bishop of Zahumlje and Hercegovina ATANASIJE,

Vicar Bishop of Hvosno ATANASIJE  
 Vicar Bishop of Jegar PORFIRIJE  
 Vicar Bishop of Dioclea JOVAN  
 Vicar Bishop of Moravica ANTONIJE

#### THE ARCHDIOCESE OF OCHRID

Archbishop of Ochrid and Metropolitan of Skoplje JOVAN  
 Bishop of Polos and Kumanovo JOAKIM  
 Bishop of Bregal and locum tenens of the Diocese of Bitolj MARKO  
 Vicar Bishop of Stobija DAVID

*[Path of Orthodoxy translation]*