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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 Diocese of Eastern America and 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 and ever-resounding Christian greeting:

CHRIST IS RISEN!

Emanating from a paternal heart overflowing with Paschal joy, We join in proclaiming the triumphant newness of life, inspired by the words of Saint John Damascus:

*"Come on this chosen Day of the Resurrection,
Let us partake of the **new fruit of the vine**.
Let us share in the divine rejoicing of the Kingdom of Christ,
Praising Him as God forevermore."
(Paschal Canon—Song 8)*

Most beloved, come on this *chosen Day of the Resurrection* and joyously *partake of the **new fruit of the vine***, ever praising and glorifying the Risen Lord! *Let us share in the divine rejoicing* of this most holy Paschal morning and become partakers *of the Kingdom of Christ*. For this dawn gives birth to the sun of a New Day and with it, true freedom in the Son, who sits upon the throne saying: *"Behold, I make all things new!"* (Rev. 21:5). Christ is Risen and brings us joy! Christ is Risen, beloved, so that we may abide with Him in the unfading day of His Heavenly Kingdom! Christ is Risen, and with Him the First Day of a New Creation, in which truth and justice radiate with new brilliance, uniting the scattered, and restoring them to the glory of His Resurrection!

Precisely, one hundred years ago, beloved, a **new vine** was planted for the Serbian Orthodox Church in the United States of America and Canada. In the Year of our Lord 1921, the Holy Bishop Nicholai of Zhicha and Ochrid arrived for the second time in the United States of America. Then, for the first time, a hierarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church stepped foot on these shores. Through the efforts of this bishop and saintly man of God, the first Diocese of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the United States of America and Canada was formed of our scattered parishes. Let us rejoice and be proud today, and grateful to the Risen Christ, as our Church on this Continent was established by a saint!

Therefore, *come on this chosen Day of the Resurrection*, in which, according to the words of the holy Bishop Nicholai:

“The frozen gather round the fire; the famished gather round the table; those who have endured great suffering through the long night rejoice at the sunrise; those exhausted by fierce battles cheer an unexpected victory. Risen Lord, You have, by Your Resurrection, become all things to all persons! Most rich King, You have, with one gift filled all the empty hands stretched heavenward! Heaven rejoices, and the earth rejoices! Heaven rejoices as a mother rejoices when she feeds her hungry children; the earth rejoices as children rejoice on receiving nourishment from their mother’s hand!”

Let all sorrow dissipate, as the holy confessor, St. Barnabas of Hvostna, the first American-born Serbian hierarch, clearly states: *“There is no sorrow to which sin is not the cause. Therefore, freeing yourself from sin means to be wedded unto joy!”* And being wedded unto joy is possible only in unity with Him, who defeated the last enemy of humankind – death, which had held us in the yoke of slavery. *“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free”*, advocates the Apostle to the Gentiles (Gal. 5:1).

And again, beloved, rejoice in our unity in Christ, Risen from the dead, for He is the firm foundation of our lives and our salvation. Rejoice in the community built upon Him – our Holy Church. He alone is our sure source of freedom from sin. At this time, as we celebrate the Centennial Year of the inception of our first Serbian Orthodox Diocese in the United States of America and Canada, with hearts filled with truth and love, let us exclaim:

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

Given in New York, at Pascha, in the Year 2021.

YOUR FERVENT INTERCESSOR BEFORE THE RISEN CHRIST,

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