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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 –
The Resurrection of Christ from the dead,
with the all-glorious and triumphant Christian greeting:

CHRIST IS RISEN!

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

*David, the ancestor of God, leaped and danced
before the ark which prefigured You.
Now let us, the holy people of God,
Seeing the fulfillment of all figures, rejoice in piety,
for Christ is risen as all-powerful.
(Pascal Canon Ode IV)*

Through these vivifying verses of liturgical poetry, the world mystically comes to understand the eternal character of a Christ given life, a life which does not dissipate for the simple sake of human death and our departure from the stage of this transitory world. The dominance of humanity's greatest enemy and the natural consequence of sin – death, are destroyed by the Golgotha wounds of Christ on the Live-giving Cross. From then on, death has become a transitional moment toward eternal joy in the unending Day of His Kingdom in Heaven.

The Resurrection of Christ, most beloved, so transfigures the whole of our being on earth, and restores its exalted, complete purpose. For Christ, who "conforming to the body of our lowliness" (Anaphora of St. Basil the Great), has become the image of our anticipation – the fulfillment of the prefiguration of the Old Testament ark of salvation. For He, who did not create death, voluntarily gave Himself in exchange for death, once and forever breaking the infernal chains of death that held us in bondage, so that He Himself might be "the first in all things", as liturgically, and mystically contemplated by St. Basil the Great.

At a time when we are again forced to be living witnesses of a war, a war which brings with it terrible human agony, suffering and destruction, in a vortex of death that ruthlessly satirizes and takes human lives and forces into exile, which breaks asunder families and extinguishes the hearth of birthplaces, we wonder what kind of answer can comfort the humiliated, abused, imprisoned and exiled human soul, and those who have to fight for bare existence on the thin margins of today's society? We are summoned by faith through the words of the Old Testament Prophet

Hosea, and the New Testament Apostle Paul, through the Resurrected Christ, in Him and through Him, who is the fulfillment of our expectations, and that faith now resonates: "Death, where is your sting? Hades, where is your victory?" (Hosea 13:14, I Cor. 15:55). For Christ is risen as all-powerful, Christ – The Victor over death, sickness, and all our inadequacies.

To his divinely inspired saying, "Christ steps lightly", the holy Bishop Nicholai of Zhicha and Ochrid adds this wisdom: "God does not need quick, but lasting victories." Therefore, it is up to us, beloved, always to be on the side of God and our Resurrector from all death and misery. "God will help," zealously testifies our holy Serbian Patriarch Pavle, "if there is anyone to help." Fighting against the dishonorable rashness of evil that attempts to permeate the world at times when we long for peace, truth, and justice, we place our only hope in the Lord, who precisely before His own voluntary passion, calmly comforts us: "Be careful, see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come" (Matt. 24:6).

Therefore, most beloved, an encounter with the Risen Lord is to live in accordance with His Gospel, the Gospel that teaches us that the Lord gives to all of us, each according to his measure, the Holy Spirit, to bring us into the community of the saints. That this community, a community of peace and love, in which those who mourn will be comforted, and those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be filled (Matt. 5:4, 6), our Savior reminds us, time and time again, when He states: "I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble; but take heart, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

Now let us, the holy people of God, as the Psalmist David before us, seeing the fulfillment of all figures, rejoice in piety. For in union with the Risen Savior, we are established in Him who came down to the lowest of our human condition to raise up fallen Adam: "Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for," exclaims the Holy Apostle, "my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord, dear friends... Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I say: rejoice!" (Philip. 4:1,4).

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

Given at Pascha, in the Year 2022.

YOUR FERVENT INTERCESSOR BEFORE THE RISEN CHRIST,

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