



“Joy of All Who Sorrow”

No 41 April 2012



Paschal Epistle

Christ is Risen!

The feast of feasts and triumph of triumphs has arrived for us, brother archpastors, right honourable fathers, brethren and sisters beloved in the Lord! Let us all greet the Resurrection of Christ and not hide our feelings: *"Let us be divinely glad, for Christ has risen as One omnipotent."*

O wondrous and blessed night! O night so full of joy for every Christian! The Risen Christ "changed the lamentation of the myrrh-bearing women into joy" on this night. And He does the same for us! This night of splendour proclaims to us His arising. And now this "prophetic night" renews us to the depths of our soul. And it gives us the certain hope that our departed ones, and we ourselves, will arise on the last day of the world to *"celebrate the eternal Pascha in the never-waning day of the Kingdom of Christ."*

The Resurrection of Christ is the central point of the doctrine of the Orthodox Church. The entire essence of the teaching of Christ is bound up with the Resurrection, and without this fact it loses its meaning. It is therefore not surprising that it is precisely in this question that we encounter the most powerful of stumbling blocks. We see the beginning of such opposition even in antiquity, when, for example, the Apostle Paul's speech about the Resurrection in the learned Areopagus of Athens was greeted with considerable irony. When he spoke about God and His attributes, about the creation, about salvation from sin, the Athenians listened to Paul. But as soon as he spoke of the Resurrection, they interrupted him, saying: "We will hear thee again of this matter" (Acts 17: 32).

For this reason let us strongly believe, with all our heart, in the Resurrection, and let us immerse ourselves in the dogma of the Church, that we may "be ready always to give an answer to every man who asks you a reason of the hope that is in you" (I Pet. 3: 15). Let us strive to instil this truth in our own life and thus inspire others to serve God and man. In our parishes and monasteries let us see genuine followers of the Risen Christ, who shine with His beauty and radiance, His triumph over evil. Let our clergymen and monastics, parishioners and pilgrims, become a living and convincing proclamation of Christianity, that the people may be confirmed in the Faith. Only this will help our neighbour to see, feel and understand that the Resurrection of Christ is the beginning of our common resurrection, that it is the passage to that region where there is no grief or sighing, where the ideal of the fullest human life is the day that never sets, the joy that never ends.

I prayerfully desire that all be renewed by joy in the Resurrection of the Lord and made steadfast in firm faith, hope and love for God and neighbour!

May the noteworthy dates celebrated this year also restore our strength: the 5th anniversary of the restoration of unity within the Russian Orthodox Church, and the 200th anniversary of the victory of Russia over Napoleon and of the blessed repose of Metropolitan Platon (Levshin), that great hierarch of the Church of Russia, who did so much to bring about the rebirth of spiritual enlightenment in our homeland.

The celebration this year of the 5th anniversary of the signing of the Act of Canonical Communion should prompt us to analyze the path we have taken and to set forth plans for the strengthening of brotherly ties, good cooperation, joint action and unity, continuing to build up the Church's service to God and man on the foundation of our common heritage of Holy Russia. This celebration should remind us that we must carefully address ourselves to unity on all levels of our life and activity, refraining from introducing our own passions into the life of the Church, striving in word and deed to establish among us "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Eph. 4: 3). May this celebration inspire us to an active, irenic labour within the Church, both with those with whom we are in fellowship, and those with whom we wait and hope for the joy of fellowship and unity!

Pondering the 200th anniversary of the victory in the Patriotic War, the fact springs to mind unbidden that in 1812, before the battle of Borodino, a miracle-working copy of the Kursk-Root Ikon was sent to General-Field Marshal Mikhail Ilarionovich Kutuzov, who was with the army in the field. This connection with the principal holy object of the Russian Diaspora obliges us to mark this event with prayer and to take an interest once again in our own rich history. The invasion of Napoleon profoundly shook the pillar of the Church of Russia of that period, namely, Metropolitan Platon of Moscow and Kolomna, that "second Chrysostom" and "apostle of Moscow", great pedagogue, homilist and writer, who educated a whole series of talented clergymen, among them the holy hierarch Philaret (Drozdov). May the life, labours and writings of Platon help us to meditate on this unique personality, to delve into the doctrine of the Orthodox Church, and to delight in the "banquet of faith" and the "richness of the goodness of the Lord" (the Paschal Homily of St. John Chrysostom), mindful that the Resurrection of Christ is our life and our eternal joy!

With paschal joy in the Resurrection of Christ!

+Hilarion,

Metropolitan of Eastern America & New York,
First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia

Church Notes and Jottings

EASTER EGGS

These days, when Easter eggs are mentioned, people immediately think of chocolate. Traditionally Easter eggs are real eggs, hardboiled and coloured red. The egg is symbolic of the tomb. As Christ burst forth from the tomb, with the new life of the Resurrection, so new life bursts forth from an egg.



Even in ancient times among pagan people, eggs were often seen as symbolic, with connotations of fertility and renewed life. There is an old tradition that, after the Ascension of Christ, St Mary Magdalene went to the Emperor, greeting him with “Christ is Risen” and offering him a decorated egg that was coloured red. With this introduction, she began to preach Christianity to him. As the Paschal custom of colouring eggs spread, the colour red continued to be used to remind the faithful that Christ’s blood was shed on Calvary for us prior to His glorious

Resurrection. Over the centuries, the custom of using a variety of colours has arisen. However, red is still the most popular colour. Another curious association of the colour red with Easter is found in Moscow where it is the custom to wear red vestments as Easter.

RADONITSA

On Radonitsa (Tuesday 24 April) we will visit the graves as usual, beginning with the grave of our foundress, here in our churchyard in Mettingham. Then we will visit graves in Beccles, Kelsale and Great Bealings. If anybody knows of other local graves of Orthodox Christians, please let us know. At each grave we pray for the repose of the soul of the departed person. Then we sing the Easter Troparion for them and leave a red egg on the grave. Although we are visiting graves, this a joyful visit and not a sad or penitential one. Just as we greet each other with “Christ is Risen”, so we greet our brothers and sisters, who have departed from us, with the joyful proclamation of the Resurrection.

The area surrounding the grave of our foundress is now being improved with a proper path to the grave. Since the level of the burial ground is higher than the area where the church stands, stone steps are being built to facilitate easier access.

CHURCH PORCH

The church porch is now complete and greatly enhances the appearance and convenience of the entrance to the church. Also the wheelchair ramp has been installed.

GIFTS

The church has received various gifts including an enamelled brass travelling ikon with four hinged sections. Also a wrought iron hat stand has been donated for the porch. This will be of great convenience for hanging wet coats on rainy days.

SHOP

St George Orthodox Information Service is opening the bookshop (22 Upper Olland Street, Bungay) on Saturday 21 April. The regular stock of new books, as advertised in Orthodox News, will be available through the shop. In addition there will be other sections, including children’s books and secondhand books. Much of the secondhand stock has been donated because profits from the sale of these books will be used for the support of Mettingham Orthodox Trust. The secondhand stock covers a wide range of subjects and should therefore appeal to a complete cross-section of the general public.

NAMEDAYS

We send congratulations to all who are celebrating a nameday at this time and wish them Many Years!

2 April - St Photina (Svetlana) the Samaritanian - Svetlana Noakes

7 April - Annunciation - Mary McCabe

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