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EASTER PASTORAL LETTER
OF THE UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC HIERARCHS IN THE USA
TO THE PRIESTS, MONKS, BROTHERS, SISTERS, SEMINARIANS, AND DEAR FAITHFUL

CHRIST IS RISEN! TRULY HE IS RISEN!

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

With this Easter message, we address you in the fourth year of the ongoing and tragic war—a year that has brought disappointment and despair to some, while offering great hope and expectation to others. This war is not simply a conflict between Russia and Ukraine; it represents an aggression against the values of freedom, dignity, and democracy. In light of the unfolding events in the world, many of us find ourselves asking: What lies ahead?

This question is not a new one for humanity. It is likely that Adam and Eve, after losing their place in the Garden of Eden, asked the same question. Their descendants have sought answers whenever fear and uncertainty have overtaken their hearts and lives.

The question was felt deeply by the disciples when the Roman governor Pilate, violating all principles of the law, unjustly condemned Jesus. The disciples especially felt it during His journey to the cross and His crucifixion—will there be salvation? Will there be a miracle? What will happen next? None of them knew how the story of the Messiah would end—would it only end with the cross and the tomb? Despair and fear overwhelmed the disciples. Some fled in fear; others sought to leave Jerusalem as quickly as possible and journeyed to Emmaus, while others gathered together, but “the doors were locked where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews” (John 20:19), anxiously awaiting the future. How familiar these feelings are to us, especially now, when in a world that has proclaimed the principles of democratic values, we witness misunderstandings and divisions...

What lies ahead?... “When the doors were locked..., Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, ‘Peace be with you!’” Here is the answer from our God, our Savior. Jesus comes as the Risen One; He brings resurrection and He bestows His peace upon us.

We believe in God, who is the Lord of life and history. We believe in Him who became one of us. A person of faith is neither a realist, nor a pessimist, nor an optimist. A realist, in viewing the difficulties of the world, seeks to retreat to a place where these challenges are less evident. A pessimist has already surrendered internally and cannot experience true freedom. An optimist may live in illusion about the world. A person of faith, regardless of the circumstances, knows that the Lord is the God who acts in the history of humanity, and in our personal history.

It is this faith that inspired Saint John Paul II, in 1978, at the beginning of his pontificate, when the world was divided by the Cold War, to say in his inaugural speech words that ignited the hearts of many with the grace of the Holy Spirit: “Do not be afraid! Open the doors to Christ!”

All our hope is in the Risen Jesus, our Savior. Our hope is in the Lord God. We may not yet have answers to the question: What lies ahead? Reflecting on the experience of the Way of the Cross and the crucifixion, we see that no one had certainty. We cannot yet see the full picture of human history, which is composed of small events—pebbles that form the entire mosaic. But we place our trust in the One who reveals the ultimate picture of world history. Christ has conquered death—the darkest stone that humanity placed before the God-Man. Jesus is the Resurrection and the Victory over death.

On this joyous Easter day, we greet you in celebration of the victory of the God-Man. Today, together, we proclaim to the world words of hope and joy: “Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the graves bestowing life.” Christ grants us Life, He is our Victory and the assurance of our salvation.

“Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?” (1 Cor. 15:54-55)

Christ is risen! Truly He is risen!

+Borys Gudziak

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Easter 2025