

PASCHA ENCYCLICAL - ENGLISH 2024



The Serbian Orthodox Church to her spiritual children at Pascha, 2024

PORFIRIJE

By the Grace of God

Orthodox Archbishop of Pec, Metropolitan of Belgrade-Karlovci,
and Serbian Patriarch, with 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!

*“When You descended into death,
O Life immortal,
You slayed Hades with the splendor of Your Divinity;
and when from the depths You raised the dead,
all the powers of heaven cried out to You:
O Giver of Life, Christ our God, glory to You.”
(Troparion of the Resurrection, Tone-2)*

Boldly and unwaveringly proclaiming the words of this divinely inspired hymn, let us join the holy forefathers, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, venerable ones, righteous ones, confessors, and teachers of the faith, as well as all the angelic choirs, who today in heaven celebrate the holy and life-giving Resurrection of the Lord! Let us also hasten with the myrrh-bearing women to the empty tomb of Christ so that we too can hear the words of the angel, filled with eternal joy:

"The time for sorrow is passed; weep not;

but announce the Resurrection to the Apostles!"

Indeed, tears have disappeared from the faces of those who were under the power of death, the hope of all believers has been fulfilled, and the hearts of those who mourn have been comforted. "Let the heaven rejoice and let the earth be glad!" Christ is risen, and life reigns!" - resound the victorious words of St. John Chrysostom, the great preacher of the Church of the Risen Christ, through heaven and earth forever and ever.

Our dear spiritual children, all sacred books of the Old and New Testament point to the truth of the Resurrection. The divinely inspired psalmist David prophesied about the suffering and Resurrection of Christ in these words:

*"How great and evil are the afflictions You showed me,
and You returned and made me live;*

and You raised me up again from the depths of the earth.” (Psalm 70 (71):20)

The great Old Testament prophet Isaiah, whom the God-bearing Fathers of the Church rightly call the Old Testament evangelist, clearly sees in advance the suffering and Resurrection of Christ, and writes: *“Surely, he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed.--- Therefore I will allot him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out himself to death” (Isaiah 53:4-5, 12)*

Together with the great Isaiah, mysteriously and amazingly, we also become witnesses of all this that has happened for our sake. And we are not only witnesses but also participants in this miraculous mystery, celebrating the Feast of Feasts today. That is why we rejoice in the Truth on this excellent and bright day: death has been defeated in encountering the Living, Incarnate God. After all, it is not strange that people in our South often call Easter *Velikdan* [Great Day], and in Greece, *Lambri* meaning Bright Day. Everything we do for the sake of good, every toil, sacrifice, and self-immolation, every sacrifice, every tear, and every pain endured gains meaning in eternity through the triumph of life over death, through the Resurrection of the Lord.

Nevertheless, even on these joyous holy days, we witness the inconsolable cry, echoing around us, of mothers for injured children, children for injured parents, brothers and sisters, and women for lost husbands, and that cry tears the chests of members of many nations, including ours-Serbian people. Violence is also committed outside of wars because in the time we live in, even the absence of war - and war, unfortunately, is always there - is not a guarantee of true peace; crimes and violence have become part of everyday life. Women, whom the Lord gave the honor of being the first heralds of His Resurrection, are most often victims of violence. Through the suffering of women, whole families also suffer. Children, to the regret and shame of a world that hypocritically boasts about "democracy" and "human rights," are victims of crimes both in war and in peace. In addition to all that, we people are increasingly unwilling and apathetic, selfish, and indifferent to the plight of others, to the suffering of our neighbors, so we can rightly ask ourselves: hasn't the abomination of desolation spoken of by the holy prophet Daniel already occurred? In other words, are we not already living in a so-called post-Christian world, and even in an anti-Christian or, moreover, an anti-Christ world, a world without faith, morals, and principles?

The man of today cries out: Lord, why have you forsaken us? But, to the same man today, God could reply with the question: Why did you leave your brother? Where is your neighbor? Therefore, where am I, your Creator, your Savior, and your only eternal and true Friend and Benefactor?

The Son of God Incarnate, the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer, Who suffered for many, for all, including those who hate Him, continues to suffer for us through all our sufferings. On our cross-bearing path we, the Serbian people, bear our cross and the Cross of Christ. We bore it in World War I when, in relation to our population, we suffered more than any other country in the world. Our cross-bearing path continued in World War II, when, in the infamous and shameful Independent State of Croatia, camps were built even for our children, where the children died of hunger, cold, disease, and abuse. Only in our country, in occupied Serbia, were whole classes of students killed in one day by the machine gun bullets of the German Nazis after school hours. We suffered in every hamlet, village, city. The truth of that suffering did not have to be confirmed by imposed amoral resolutions: they were witnessed by the suffering itself, without false witnesses in the form of direct descendants and indirect followers of the perpetrators of the actual genocide.

As shepherds of the rational flock of Christ, we regretfully remind everyone of the fact that the world we live in has forgotten the genocide of the Serbian people in the twentieth century, as well as in the centuries that preceded it. Every other hill in places where Serbs live is a kind of Golgotha.

We are comforted and reassured by the fact that we belong to a nation that, in the years of peace, which came after the terrible times of death, followed the Gospel of the Risen Christ on which it was founded, forgave its debtors, and with members

of other nations wanted and tried to build a better and shared future. That is why today we strongly raise our voices and point out the absolute falsehood of the attempt at an unprecedented historical revisionism, in which the Serbian people, victims of multiple genocides and ethnic cleansing, are being declared perpetrators of genocide through a simple inversion. We do not minimize the extent of the crimes in Srebrenica, but, as Orthodox Serbs, we do not keep silent about the crimes against the Serbian people in the vicinity of Srebrenica. Unfortunately, the proponents of the resolutions did not pay attention to those crimes in Serbian villages where whole families were buried, which happened continuously from 1992 to 1995. According to them, one group has an exclusive claim to its sacrifice and to the pain stemming from it. In our opinion, all innocent victims are innocent victims, be they Muslim, Croatian, or even Serbian, which is "wisely" kept silent by modern revisionists and enemies of historical truth, who, by imposing an exclusive right on pain and victims, leave all of us who live in these areas a stumbling block for the future.

The nature of created beings includes their connection with the world, with nature, i.e., with the earth on which it lives, which is its cradle, home, and burial place. Kosovo and Metohija are both our cradle and our home. In Kosovo and Metohija, in Old Serbia, there are our living and our departed. But there are no dead. We are the Church of the living. We are a Christian people, a people both of Golgotha and of the Resurrection. We are a people of Christian identity expressed through holy endowments, which make up the most dense prayer wreath of

temples in the world, the wreath we wove in Kosovo and Metohija. And it is the truth that stands on the mountain! This is where our past, present, and future intertwine. Because, for us, this holy and cross-resurrected land is not an ordinary territory but the very holy land from which our "field of dry bones" will wake up and be resurrected. We should always pray and be with our suffering brothers and sisters in Kosovo and Metohija, who are a living expression of hope, love, persistence, and endurance in the Crucified and Risen Christ the Lord, who are the target of violence just because they are Orthodox Christians, Orthodox Serbs, who live and exist on their own land. They live in so-called peace, in a "peace" in which there is no freedom, in a "peace" in which there is only fear and injustice. Again, as many times before, we are faced with adversities and pressures, but the words of the holy prophet Nahum are always in our minds: "*Though they are at full strength and many, they will be cut off and pass away.* (Nahum 1:12)

Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who offered Himself as a sacrifice, once and for all, for the life of the world, to bear the sins of many, our Emmanuel, which means *God is with us*, has never forgotten or forsaken us. We turn to him, in these holy days, with a kneeling prayer to protect, save, have mercy, and preserve our Orthodox people from all plagues, injustices, and violence. In that prayerful meeting with Him, the Living God, the Risen One, we believe and know that every tragedy becomes a space for hope and meaning, while without Him, hopelessness, and meaninglessness rule everywhere, no matter what clothes they wear. This represents one of the most significant challenges of

our time, against which we Christians, as companions of the Incarnate Meaning and Word, must stand firmly and unwaveringly, testifying that there is one natural Way, Truth, and Life - against all false ones.

Therefore, we invite you, dear spiritual children, to tirelessly nurture, which means to express, prayerfully and diligently, the legitimate and natural need for national unity. We achieve this national unity under the omophorion of Saint Sava, in the Church of Christ, the Living God, whose Crucifixion and Resurrection the Serbian Orthodox people live and iconize in their journey through history. The Holy Church of Christ is the fundamental home of our earthly residences and knows no borders. Who can determine the boundaries of the Resurrection and the life on which our Church is based? It is the word of Christ: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, yet shall he live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die." (St. John 11:25-26) Therefore, let us make sure that we graciously and worshipfully immerse ourselves in the Mystery of the Cross and Resurrection of Christ and that we love one another as Christ loves us. "*So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory'"*" (I Cor. 15, 54), and again, *God will wipe away every tear from every face; He will take away the disgrace of His people from all the earth.*" (Isaiah 25:8)

Christ is Risen!

Given at the Serbian Patriarchate in Belgrade at Pascha 2024.

Your intercessors before the Resurrected Christ:

**Archbishop of Pec,
Metropolitan of Belgrade-Karlovci and
Serbian Patriarch PORFIRIJE**

Metropolitan of Dabro-Bosna **CHRYSOSTOM**

Metropolitan of Montenegro and the Coastlands **JOANIKIJE**

Bishop of Srem **VASILIJE**

Bishop of Banja Luka **JEFREM**

Bishop of Budim **LUKIJAN**

Bishop of Banat **NIKANOR**

Bishop of New Gracanica-Midwestern America **LONGIN**

Bishop of Canada **MITROPHAN**

Bishop of Backa **IRINEJ**

Bishop of Great Britain and Scandinavia **DOSITEJ**

Bishop of Zicha **JUSTIN**

Bishop of Vranje **PAHOMIJE**

Bishop of Sumadija **JOVAN**

Bishop of Branicevo **IGNATIJE**

Bishop of Zvornik-Tuzla **FOTIJE**

Bishop of Mileseva **ATANASIJE**

Bishop of Düsseldorf and Germany **GRIGORIJE**

Bishop of Ras and Prizren **TEODOSIJE**

Bishop of Western America **MAXIM**

Bishop of Gornji Karlovac **GERASIM**

Bishop of Eastern America **IRINEJ**

Bishop of Krusevac **DAVID**

Bishop of Slavonia **JOVAN**

Bishop of Austria and Switzerland **ANDREJ**

Bishop of Bihac-Petrovac **SERGIJE**

Bishop of Timok **ILARION**

Bishop of Nis **ARSENIJE**

Bishop of Buenos Aires and South-Central America **KIRILO**

Bishop of Australia and New Zealand Metropolitanate **SILUAN**

Bishop of Dalmatia **NIKODIM**

Bishop of Osek-Polje and Baranja **HERUVIM**

Bishop of Valjevo **ISIHJE**

Bishop of Budim and Niksic **METODIJE**

Bishop of Zahumlje and Hercegovina **DIMITRIJE**

Bishop of Sabac **JEROTEJ**

Bishop of Western Europe **JUSTIN**

Vicar Bishop of Remezijan **STEFAN**

Vicar Bishop of Mohac **DAMASKIN**

Vicar Bishop of Marcha **SAVA**

Vicar Bishop of Hum **JOVAN**

Vicar Bishop of Hvostan **ALEKSEI**

Vicar Bishop of Novo Brdo **ILARION**

Vicar Bishop of Jegarski **NEKTARIJE**

Vicar Bishop of Lipljane **DOSITEJ**

Vicar Bishop of Toplica **PETAR**

Retired Bishop of Zvornik-Tuzla **VASILIJE**

Retired Bishop of Canada **GEORGIJE**

Retired Bishop of Central Europe **KONSTANTIN**

Retired Bishop of Slavonija SAVA

Retired Bishop of Mileseva FILARET

Retired Bishop of Nis JOVAN