



METROPOLITAN ARCHEPARCHY OF PHILADELPHIA
Ukrainian Catholic

827 North Franklin Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19123-2097
Phone (215) 627-0143 Fax (215) 627-0377
ukrmet@catholic.org

No. 198/2009 O

This Number Should be Prefixed to Your Reply

Office of the Metropolitan

**PASTORAL MESSAGE OF THE UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC HIERARCHY OF
THE U.S.A. TO OUR CLERGY, HIEROMONKS AND BROTHERS, RELIGIOUS
SISTERS, SEMINARIANS AND BELOVED FAITHFUL**

CHRIST IS RISEN!

“Now that very day two of them were going to a village seven miles from Jerusalem called Emmaus...” *Luke 24:13*

The highlight of Easter morning for each of us is undoubtedly the moment we first hear the triumphant Paschal troparion ringing out at the beginning of the Matins of the Resurrection: “*Christ is risen from the dead, trampling death by death, and to those in the tombs giving life!*” When we repeat these joyful words, as we will many times on Easter Sunday and for the next forty days, all our earthly cares seem to melt away, things that trouble us fade into the background and become somehow less burdensome. A heavy weight – the weight of sin and eternal death – has been lifted from our shoulders with the glorious Resurrection of Christ.

These feelings of joy were not shared by at least two of Jesus’ disciples, however. In one of the most memorable and evocative scenes from the Gospel accounts of the Resurrection, we see Cleopas and his nameless companion, hurrying away from Jerusalem as the sun sets on that momentous day.

They are distressed, disappointed and fearful. As they walk they speak in hushed and agitated tones to one another about what has just taken place before their eyes: the seizure, trial, scourging and death by crucifixion of their leader upon whom they had pinned all their aspirations of national liberation, Jesus of Nazareth. Their hopes are dashed; they are convinced that everything is finished. And then, it seems out of nowhere a stranger joins them on the road and begins to converse with them...

We are all familiar with this marvelous scene, how Jesus gradually lifts the veil from the eyes of Cleopas and his companion so that they are able to recognize him, how he transforms their fear and doubt into rekindled hope and a zealous faith in the reality of his Resurrection. How does he do this; how does he convince them? Through his word and through the breaking of the bread.

As he walks with them Jesus does not perform a miracle that would instantaneously convince Cleopas and his companion of his identity. Instead, he teaches them. He speaks to them from Holy Scripture and allows everything that Moses and the prophets said about the coming of the Messiah to gradually reveal to them who he really is. And later, at table at the inn in Emmaus, when Jesus takes the bread, invokes a

blessing, breaks it and shares it with them, the final obstacle is removed from their mind, the veil is completely lifted from their eyes. The light floods in and they recognize him. It is the Lord! And in this jubilant realization they drop everything and race back to Jerusalem, even now in the dead of night, to share with the others, this astonishing appearance of the resurrected Jesus.

It is no accident that the name of Cleopas' companion on the road to Emmaus is never revealed. He is nameless because he is us. And the road that links Jerusalem to Emmaus and back again is a symbol of the road along which each of us is a traveler. In fact all humanity moves along this path – the path of life – an immense caravan of people who are sometimes happy and content, but often distrustful and disillusioned, sometimes sure and steady, but often uncertain and disoriented, but who are always searching or waiting.

We, like Cleopas' companion along the road, are naïve, filled with fickle hopes and worldly aspirations. We are blind to God's Providence and have been brought low by the circumstances of life and our own sinfulness and pride. Who can restore our equilibrium? Who can save us?

Who indeed, but the Resurrected Lord, who comes to us of his own free will. It is he who joins us as we journey every day along our road of life. It is he who teaches and comforts us. It is he who shares a meal with us, as he did with Cleopas and his companion. In other words he enlightens us through Holy Scripture and he nourishes us with his Body and Blood in the Holy Eucharist. And our eyes are opened and our hearts are warmed and we gain strength for the journey.

Our prayer for you on this glorious Feast of the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is that our ears may always be attuned to hear the voice of the Lord as he speaks to us in many ways but especially through the inspired writings of Holy Scripture. May also our eyes be opened to truly recognize our Lord in the breaking of the bread so that we may worthily receive him in the Holy Eucharist. And, along with Cleopas and his companion, may our hearts also 'burn within us' with the love of God and neighbor.

God grant to you and to your loved ones, and to our brothers and sisters in our beloved Ukraine and scattered throughout the world, good health, joy, peace and contentment. A blessed Pascha!

CHRIST IS RISEN! GLORIFY HIM!

+Stefan

Metropolitan-Archbishop of Philadelphia

+Robert

Eparch of St. Josaphat in Parma

+Richard

Eparch of St. Nicholas in Chicago

+Paul

Eparch of Stamford

+John

Auxiliary Bishop to the Metropolitan