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Office of the Metropolitan

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

"Were not our hearts burning inside...
It is true. Our Lord is risen"
(Lk. 24: 32 & 34)

During these past 40 days of the Great Fast, our Church called on us to more intense prayer, penance and charity. This was not a forced imposition making us sad or irritable. Rather, it was an invitation to transformation. It was a challenge to change, to improve ourselves in order that we may be truly worthy to meet and enjoy the glorious Feast of our Lord's Holy Resurrection.

Just prior to that first glorious Easter Morning, there were betrayals, loneliness, suffering, passion and death. Faith was displaced by fear and sadness in the disciples and friends of Christ. Their hope was buried in the tomb. The last act of love was the weeping women carrying the ointment.

A favorite Resurrection Gospel passage is the event of Emmaus. Two disheartened disciples, Cleopas and Luke, talk sadly along the way about Jesus' passion and death. Unknown to them, our Lord joins them on the road and explains all those things that had to happen. Later at the meal, after "breaking bread", the two disciples recognized the Risen Jesus, and as the Gospel tells us, "They said to one another, 'Were not our hearts burning inside us as He talked to us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?'" They rush back to meet the other disciples and are greeted with the joyous news, "It is true. The Lord is risen." (Lk. 24: 32 & 34)

During this whole period of Great Fast preparation, our Church led us gradually to these astonishing Gospel passages announcing the Resurrection of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ. And every time we hear this "good news" our hearts should burn inside us as we marvel at all these things that were done for our salvation. We cannot be silent, we cannot just whisper it, we have to shout it out, not just you and I, but everyone, the whole Church; Christ is risen; truly He is risen!"

The Resurrection of Christ is the greatest proof of God's love for us. With the disciples, we too realize that there is no Resurrection without the cross. Jesus had to suffer to bring us life. Christ's victory over death is our victory also because we have been baptized into His death and

shall rise with Him in glory. We live according to Christ's Gospel anticipating His blessings and eternal life.

Faith in the Resurrection leads to life. Our faith in Easter goes beyond the tomb. Yes, we kiss the burial shroud with tears in our eyes. These tears are transformed into gladness because our faith is in the Risen Christ. Our Lord lives.

We do not just read about the Resurrection once a year, celebrate Easter as a historical event, but we rush to the empty tomb and witness the love that conquered death. This faith has meaning for us today and everyday of our lives. Christ's Resurrection is reflected in our lives when we choose life over death; when we prefer light to darkness; when we choose a life of grace rather than a life of sin; and when we put love where there is hatred and indifference.

We cannot help but witness this faith to everyone, together, in Church, at our Easter meals, "It is true, Christ is risen!" With the two Emmaus disciples, Mary Magdalene and the myrrh-bearing women, Peter and John, the rest of the Apostles, and eventually Thomas, We proclaim: "Are not our hearts burning inside us ... It is true! Our Lord is risen!" (Lk. 24: 32 & 34).

The mystery of the Resurrection of our Lord is the most important feast in our Church's calendar. It is the Feast of Feasts, the Holy day of the Holy days. And we are blessed this year to celebrate Easter together, all our Ukrainian Catholic churches, with our Ukrainian Orthodox Brothers and Sisters, and all Christians. May our faith in the Resurrection ring out a resounding "Christ is Risen" this year everywhere.

On this joyous, solemn and glorious Feast of Easter, we the episcopal shepherds of the Ukrainian Catholic Metropolitan Province of the USA, pray for abundant grace, good health and success in your daily struggles for the good of our families, people and Christ's Church. Let us all be grateful for all of Almighty God's great love for us and His generous gifts.

May our Lord's victory – His conquest over sin and death, and His promise of peace and eternal life be yours always!

Christ is risen!
Truly He is risen!

+Stefan Soroka
Metropolitan-Archbishop of Philadelphia

+Richard Seminack
Eparch of St. Nicholas in Chicago

+Paul Chomnycky, OSBM
Eparch of Stamford

+John Bura (author)
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