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Paschal Epistle
Of His Eminence
Metropolitan Laurus
First Hierarch of the
Russian Orthodox Church Abroad

Christ is Risen!

Rejoicing in the Risen Christ, the Source and Fulfillment of our faith and salvation, I sincerely greet the Right Reverend Hierarchs, the all-honorable priests-concelebrants, and the God-loving children of the Russian Church Abroad, with the world-saving feast of Holy Pascha!

Paschal joy is first of all the joy of the Church. We each experience the Resurrection of Christ and we know that we must celebrate Pascha in a renewed state of soul in order to feel our own resurrection with the Lover of man, for only in this way is our participation in the feast expressed, as the Apostle Paul writes: *For Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us, therefore, celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. (1 Cor. 5:7-8).* I wish everyone such participation in the celebration of Pascha, with the words of St. Gregory the Theologian: “Let your whole life be renewed, let all of your actions be

renewed: thus a person is renewed in spirit, thus the day of spiritual renewal is honored.”

The Lord creates each person as His friend; and this friendship becomes more close at the time of our baptism, when we enter His Church. Every person is a friend of God, as St. Lazarus is called in the Church hymns; and this friend of Christ has lived (been present) in each one of us, at one time or another: he has lived (been present?) through love, through constant prayerful communion and friendship with Him. Sometimes this has happened with people in their childhood, and sometimes later, but at sometime this friend of the Creator has lived in the heart of each of us. Over the course of time this friend in us dies.

Nevertheless, we do not become despondent, and in worshipping now the Resurrection of Christ, we worship hope, for when the Savior died on the cross, when it seemed that everything was finished and the tomb was sealed, it was then that the Lord resurrected.

Our hope is that there is no end for man, that each of us will resurrect not only in the future life, but also here on earth; that each of us can resurrect from the abyss of sin to a renewed, good, Christian life, for the Lord is stronger than death. He conquered it by His Resurrection and in the miraculous resurrection of Lazarus, and with our desire and active yearning for Him, He can perform this miracle in our heart, in our life.

While exchanging the Paschal kiss with you now, dear fathers, brothers, sisters, and children of the Russian

Church Abroad, I prayerfully desire that this friend of Christ might resurrect in the heart of each of us, that we might be renewed and become better and draw near to our Risen Savior!

I greet all the God-preserved Russian people with a triple kiss, rejoicing that, although “Hell is king over mortal man, it is not for ever,” as we read in the Canon on Holy Saturday. What do these words mean? This means that hell continues to exist, but, glory be to God, it will not reign forever over man, and everyone who actively strives for God, piously communes with Him in the Mysteries of the Church, and struggles with his weaknesses according to his strength, will be delivered from the power of hell thanks to the three-day Resurrection of Christ, will overcome the effects of the Soviet period, will be drawn towards Christ, will return to his historic roots, will be reborn and renewed. May the holy New-Martyrs and Confessors of Russia, who shed their blood which became the seed for the genuine rebirth of all the ends of the Russian Land, be our intercessors before God for this Paschal grace of renewal. To be included in the process of Her gradual rebirth, and to help in it—is our duty before God, the Church, and history. The saints who shone forth in our Russian Land and our pious forefathers, who lived according to the ideals of Holy Russia, summon all of us to this great work by their personal example. The much-suffering Russian people call all of us to this great work. The Risen Lord has called us to this work! May He strengthen all of us before the

approaching events, which will serve for our resurrection with Him, and the establishing of peace and unity in the Local Russian Orthodox Church.

I prayerfully desire that all of you may spend these joyful days in health and prosperity, in spiritual joy, experiencing the mighty power of the Perfect Good and Divine Beauty, illumined by the Light of the Resurrection of Christ, Whom the darkness of this world cannot overcome!

Truly Christ is Risen!

With Paschal joy in the Risen Christ and asking your prayers,

+ Metropolitan Laurus
First Hierarch of the Russian Church Abroad

Pascha, 2007