



April 19/May 2, 2021
The Holy Pascha of Our Lord God and Savior, Jesus Christ Ukaz
05/001

Dear Faithful of the God-protected Diocese of Sitka and Alaska,

Христос Воскресе! Во Истину Воскресе!
Christ is Risen! Truly, He is Risen!
Kristusaaq Unguirtuq! Ilumun unguirtur!
Kristus anahgrecum! Alhecum anahgrecum!
Xristos Kuxwoo digoot! Xegaa-kux Kuxwoo digoot!

Truly, that the Lord is Risen—in whatever dialect we use—is the Truth we are called to confess with our mouths, hear with our hearts, and make present in our lives. When we cry out, “Христос Воскресе! Во Истину Воскресе” we have nothing to fear, not even death, for He is with us. “Let the earth hear, and all that is therein; the world, and all things that come forth of it,”¹ for God, our God, who is risen from the dead, is with us. When we cry out, “Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen,” we become bearers of hope to a despairing world and witnesses to the One “Who is the way, the truth, and the life” that has become our way, our truth, and our life. When we cry out, “*Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen, Kristusaaq Unguirtuq! Ilumun unguirtur!*,” we proclaim to our brothers and sisters, we proclaim to ourselves, the victory of life over death, light over darkness, and goodness over evil. And we proclaim that our Lord’s radiant victory can be ours “by obeying the Gospel according to the design of the Savior.”²

This Pascha, we should all be especially grateful. By the mercy of God, we are finally moving out of the long, bitter winter of a pandemic that has struck the whole inhabited world. By the mercy of God, we have been blessed to see another Pascha. The pandemic has been painful in so many ways: some including myself have lost loved ones; others including myself have been very sick from this plague; still others have lost their livelihood; and all have been at times deprived of going to Church, all have found themselves going to Church with restrictions they do not like, all have found themselves cut off from those they love. And yet again, by the mercy of God, we have been blessed to see another Pascha.

There have been many lessons in this trial. Hopefully, we have learned to pray more inwardly, to call out to God more consistently, and to have a more intimate communion with our merciful Lord. Hopefully, we have learned to treasure the gift of coming together in Church to worship with our brothers and sisters. Hopefully, we have become more compassionate to those in need. And hopefully, we have learned one very important lesson: As Christians we are called to be patient.

We have all been asked by civil authorities and by the Church alike to be patient. Patience, like the divine virtues of obedience and humility, are not valued in our impatient, disobedient, and arrogant generation, but humble, obedient patience is precisely how we work out our salvation. This is why our Savior promises “he that shall be patient unto the

¹ Isaiah 34:1.

² Gennadius of Constantinople, *Pauline Commentary from the Greek Church*.

end, the same shall be saved.”³ That is why, as Saint Augustine taught, our Lord “suffered with a patience all his own to teach us the patience we should have. In his resurrection, he showed us the reward of patience.”⁴ The reward for our patience is “newness life,” “joy unspeakable and full of glory,” the Pascha, the Pascha of the Lord.

Beloved in Christ Jesus, by the mercy of God, we have been blessed to see another Pascha. Let us live by the Resurrection. This means setting aside grudges, hard feelings, and resentment for wrongs in the past. Our Lord was crucified for all of us and rose again for all of us, for those who love us and for those who hate us. “Christ is Risen” assumes that “we forgive all by His Resurrection.”⁵ We forgive all, because Christ is Risen. We embrace one another, because Christ is Risen. Christ is Risen, “and not one of the dead remains in the grave.”⁶ Christ is Risen, and not one enemy remains in our heart. Christ is Risen, my brothers and sisters, may we live with gratitude, patience, humility, obedience, and an eagerness to forgive, so that we might in our own lives both bear witness to the truth that our Lord is Risen and also give glory to His Name.

With Paschal blessings and much love in our Risen Lord,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ Alexis". The plus sign is a simple cross, and the name "Alexis" is written in a cursive, flowing script.

+ALEXIS
Bishop of Bethesda
Locum Tenens of the Diocese of Sitka and Alaska

³ Matthew 24:13.

⁴ *Sermon* 175.3.6.

⁵ Doxastikon for the Matins Aposticha of Holy Pascha.

⁶ Catechetical Homily of Saint John Chrysostom on the Holy and Radiant Day of the All-glorious and Saving Resurrection of Christ our God.