

GREAT AND HOLY PASCHA:
RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD
GOD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST



Icon of the Descent into Hades

Resurrection of Our Lord

April 12, 2020

Pastoral Letter of the Ukrainian Catholic Hierarchy of the U.S.A.

**CHRIST IS RISEN!
TRULY HE IS RISEN!**

**Beloved Brothers and Sisters in
Christ,**

This Easter greeting resounds in a new and, for us, unfamiliar situation. We find ourselves celebrating, not in brightly decorated churches filled with joyful parishioners, with bells loudly ringing, but in the midst of a solitude and emptiness, that has enveloped our world due to the emergence of a virus that remains frightfully confusing for the average person, the virus known as COVID-19.

Especially now, it is so important for us to hear these words of hope and joy: “Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and to those in the tombs giving life!” He also grants life to us—who live here and now, in the midst of a quiet world, that seems to have suddenly come to

a standstill.

Pascha is the greatest and most joyful feast in the Christian calendar, a feast of overflowing happiness. It is interesting to note, however, that the Feast of Pascha begins with sorrow and emptiness.

The Evangelists, in their telling of the story of Easter, begin, not with the joy of the Resurrection, but with the sadness of the empty tomb. Mary Magdalene and the other women come, lamenting and sorrowful, early in the morning, to the grave of Jesus in order to anoint the body of their beloved teacher. Instead of Jesus’ body, however, they discover an empty tomb. Horrified, they think that someone has inexplicably stolen the body! Only then do they hear the angel’s announcement of Christ’s Resurrection: “He is not here for he has risen, as he said he would. Come and see the place where he lay” (Mt. 28:6). Only then do they encounter the risen Christ and embrace him:

“And suddenly, coming to meet them was Jesus... and the women came up to him and, clasping his feet, did him homage” (Mt. 28:9). Only then, do they receive their commission from Jesus: “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers that they must leave for Galilee; there they will see me” (Mt. 28:10).

First comes emptiness, then comes fulfillment. First comes sorrow, then comes joy. First comes death, then comes life. Pascha begins with nothing and ends with everything!

When we think about it, we can say that there is a tiny reflection of the Paschal story in each of our lives. Just as Pascha begins with emptiness, so do our lives begin with emptiness. Before we take our first breath, we are called to leave the comfort of our mother’s womb. And throughout our entire life, every time we take a step forward, we are called to empty ourselves and leave something behind. Before we make a commitment to our spouse in marriage, we are called to let go of our independence. Before we respond to a vocation call or make a career choice, we are called to let go of other equally attractive opportunities. At every step of life, in order to receive new life, we are called to empty ourselves in some

way.

The same applies to our spiritual life. Emptiness is part of the human experience, and over these past weeks in the midst of a global pandemic, it is an experience being shared by all humankind. Emptiness can bring emotional pain, yet at the same time, it can also be received as a spiritual gift. We all need that emptiness within ourselves: that space that makes room for something new, that space that can be opened to God.

This is why during the time of Great Lent, the Church in her wisdom, traditionally asks us to empty ourselves of the sins, temptations and daily preoccupations that clutter up our lives. Why? In order to make room for Christ, who rises triumphantly from the tomb today. He fills our spiritual emptiness with the promise that Resurrection brings—the promise of eternal life!

Our prayerful wish for each of us today on this glorious Feast of Pascha is that our hearts and souls be filled with the indescribable and incomparable joy of Our Lord’s Resurrection from the tomb. May this joy fill every emptiness within us, wipe away all pain and fear, conquer every doubt and temptation, and remain with us forever!

Let us follow the example of the holy women who visited the tomb at dawn on that first Easter morning—distressed with the empty tomb they received the fullness of joy. Let us embrace the Risen Christ who comes to fill our emptiness, especially in

this time of global crisis. Let us with confidence and in the sureness of our faith, in word and deed, spread the Good News of his Resurrection throughout the world!

Christ is Risen! Truly he is Risen!

+Borys Gudziak

Archbishop of Philadelphia for Ukrainians
Metropolitan of Ukrainian Catholics in the United States

+Paul Chomnycky, OSBM (author & Eparch of Stamford)

+Benedict Aleksiychuk (Eparch of St. Nicholas in Chicago)

+Bohdan J. Danylo (Eparch of St. Josaphat in Parma)

+Andriy Rabiyy (Auxiliary Bishop of Philadelphia)

Easter 2020

*“Jesus said to her, ‘Mary!’ She turned and said to him in Hebrew, ‘Rabbouni,’ which means ‘Teacher’...”
John 20:16*

Dear Parishioners:

Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen!

Today, we share a joy, a joy of wonder, a joy that comes from within, because Christ is risen! Today, we share the same joy of the disciples to whom Mary Magdalene brought the

good news that Jesus Christ is risen, and she has seen Him!

This joy of the Resurrection starts from a personal encounter with the Risen Christ. What did it take for Mary Magdalene’s tears to give way to Easter joy? Nothing less than meeting the risen Christ! And so, the Easter Gospel is not only about life from death, but also about this encounter Mary has with the Lord. Jesus meets us – calls our name, opens our eyes, and invites us to see. He wants us to experience the joy of encountering Him and living

for Him and not for ourselves. If we do this, we will experience the joy of being liberated from our sins which trap us in self-centeredness. No matter what may be happening in our lives, we can still experience spiritual joy through the love of God and living the way God made us to live, which is to live for others and for Him.

I realize that many families are going through difficult times right now. Some are dealing with illness in their house. Almost everyone knows someone who is sick, or is vulnerable to getting sick. There is also the worry, as the crisis lasts, of financial problems in each household as the economy suffers. In a similar way, our parish is sharing that same hardship. With the extension of the social distance guidelines until the end of the month, our parish will have gone through seven weeks without a public Liturgy, and without our weekly offertory collection, which is the largest source of support for the parish. Typically, these seven weeks provide about one-third of the parish's annual income. It would be hard for most households to suffer such a loss.

Therefore, I ask you to please support your parish during this time of need. We will get through this crisis and come out on the other side, but our

parish needs to pay its bills as much as possible now. Of course, if your personal financial hardship prevents you from contributing at your normal level or at all, I certainly understand and I pray for you. But for those that are able, please do what you can, now, to help.

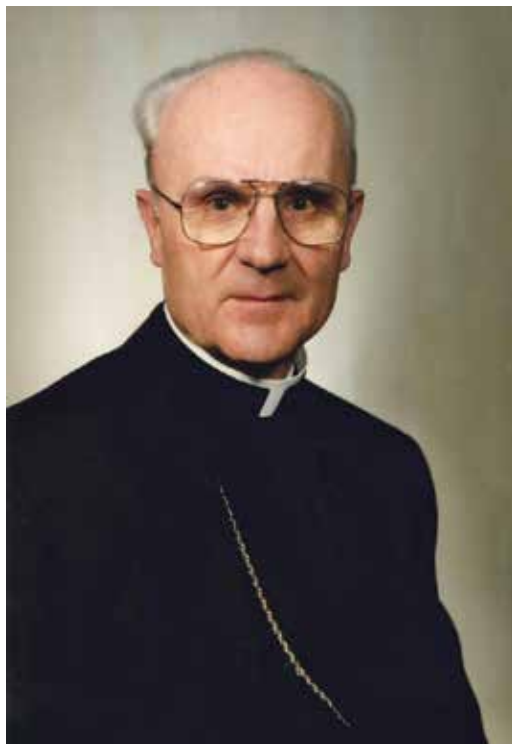
One day soon, an announcement will be made that we can publicly celebrate the Divine Liturgy again. I look forward to that day, and to welcoming you back into church. It will be a joyous day, and we will all appreciate seeing each other more than ever, and as we pray together in church we will give thanks again for Christ's gift of the Church to us!

My fervent prayer is that our Resurrected and Living Lord may bestow his peace and grace upon you and your loved ones, upon our community, our nation and the world! May God bless you and keep you!

Father Nestor

P.S. To all those Parishioners who have been donating throughout this COVID-19 crisis: THANK YOU! Your generosity helps to keep us going. May the Risen Lord bless all of you!

RETIRED UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC METROPOLITAN ARCHBISHOP STEPHEN SULYK DIES AT 95



Retired Metropolitan-Archbishop Stephen Sulyk of the Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy of Philadelphia died the morning of April 6 after having been hospitalized some hours before with symptoms of COVID-19.

St. John Paul II appointed him to head the Archeparchy on December 29, 1980. He was consecrated a Bishop in Rome on March 1, 1981. He retired November 29, 2000. St. John Paul II

accepted his resignation after he turned 75, the age at which canon law requires bishops to turn in their resignation to the Pope.

He served on various committees of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Synod of Bishops of the Ukrainian Catholic Church.

On June 14, 2002, Archbishop Sulyk marked the 50th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood with the celebration of a hierarchical Divine Liturgy and a testimonial banquet June 23, 2002.

When he retired as Metropolitan-Archbishop in 2000, he was succeeded by Archbishop Stefan Soroka, who retired Feb. 19, 2019, for medical reasons at age 67. Pope Francis named his successor the same day, Metropolitan-Archbishop Borys Gudziak, whose enthronement was June 4, 2019.

The Funeral for Archbishop *Emeritus* Stephen Sulyk is scheduled for Monday, April 13th with burial in the Crypt of the Cathedral. We will have a Divine Liturgy in St. Cyril's for his intention on Monday at 10 am, the same time that the Funeral is taking place.

LITURGICAL SERVICES ONLINE

At this time, we are planning on streaming the following Liturgical Services:

- Vespers Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great on Holy Saturday at 5 pm
- Resurrection Matins on Easter at 8 am.
- Divine Liturgy on Easter Sunday at 9 am.
- Easter Basket Blessing will be shown after the Divine Liturgy
- Divine Liturgy on Bright Monday

at 10 am

- Divine Liturgy on Bright Tuesday at 9 am

These services can be found on Facebook or through a link on our website <https://stcyrils.weconnect.com>.

Please note that the times given are when the service will be taking place. It is live-streaming on Facebook; streaming on YouTube is delayed due to the need to upload and process the video file.

ACT OF SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

It has long been a Catholic understanding that when circumstances prevent one from receiving Holy Communion, it is possible to make an Act of Spiritual Communion which is a source of grace. Spiritual Communion means uniting one's self in prayer with Christ's sacrifice and worshipping Him in His Body and Blood. The most common reason for making an Act of Spiritual Communion is when a person cannot attend the Divine Liturgy. Acts of Spiritual Communion increase our desire to receive sacramental Communion and help us avoid the sins that would make us unable to receive

Holy Communion worthily. When unable to receive Holy Communion, pray the following prayer:

“My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament. I love you above all things and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to you. Never permit me to be separated from You. Amen.”

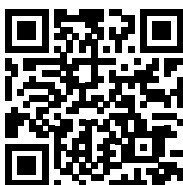
Ss. Cyril & Methodius Ukrainian Catholic Church

135 River St., Olyphant, PA 18447-1435

Telephone: 570-291-4451 Fax: 570-489-6918

Web Site: stcyrils.weconnect.com

E-Mail: sscyrilandmethodius@comcast.net



Rev. Nestor Iwasiw, Pastor

The Lamb Who Was Slain Has Delivered Us from Death and Given Us Life

There was much proclaimed by the prophets about the mystery of the Passover: that mystery is Christ, and to Him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

For the sake of suffering humanity He came down from heaven to earth, clothed Himself in that humanity in the Virgin's womb, and was born a man. Having then a body capable of suffering, He took the pain of fallen man upon Himself; He triumphed over the diseases of soul and body that were its cause, and by His Spirit, which was incapable of dying, He dealt man's destroyer, death, a fatal blow.

He was led forth like a lamb; He was slaughtered like a sheep. He ransomed us from our servitude to the world, as He had ransomed Israel from the land of Egypt; He freed us from our slavery to the devil, as He had freed Israel from the hand of Pharaoh. He sealed our souls with His own Spirit, and the members of our body with His own blood.

He is the One who covered death with shame and cast the devil into mourning, as Moses cast Pharaoh into mourning. He is the One who smote sin and robbed iniquity of offspring. He is the One who brought us out of slavery into freedom, out of dark-

ness into light, out of death into life, out of tyranny into an eternal kingdom; who made us a new priesthood, a people chosen to be His own forever. He is the Passover that is our salvation.

It is he who endured every kind of suffering in all those who foreshadowed Him. In Abel He was slain, in Isaac bound, in Jacob exiled, in Joseph sold, in Moses exposed to die. He was sacrificed in the Passover lamb, persecuted in David, dishonored in the prophets.

It is He who was made man of the Virgin, He who was hung on the tree; it is He who was buried in the earth, raised from the dead, and taken up to the heights of heaven. He is the mute lamb, the slain lamb, the lamb born of Mary, the fair ewe. He was seized from the flock, dragged off to be slaughtered, sacrificed in the evening, and buried at night. On the tree no bone of His was broken; in the earth His body knew no decay. He is the One who rose from the dead, and who raised man from the depths of the tomb.

St. Melito of Sardis