



**The Serbian Orthodox Church  
to her spiritual children at Pascha, 2023**

**PORFIRIJE**

By the Grace of God

Orthodox Archbishop of Pec, Metropolitan of Belgrade Karlovci and Serbian Patriarch, with all the Hierarchs of the Serbian Orthodox Church to all the clergy, monastics, and all the sons and daughters of our Holy Church: grace, mercy and peace from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, with the joyous Paschal greeting:

***Christ is Risen!***

*And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed  
in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed.*

*But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed.*

*You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified.*

*He is risen! He is not here.*

*See the place where they laid Him.*

(St. Mark 16, 5-6)

Let us rejoice, our dear spiritual children, let us rejoice and celebrate the Feast of feasts, the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ from the dead. We rejoice and celebrate because we, as the myrrhbearing women of old, have heard the words of the angel: "Do not be afraid!" We rejoice and celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord Christ as for more than eight centuries the white angel of the famous frescoe in the Mileseva monastery of Saint Sava has been pointing to the empty tomb and telling us: "He is risen, He is not here!" Let us rejoice because despite all circumstances and difficulties we are accompanied by the deep and peaceful "Old Serbian" eyes of the White angel – the most beautiful, the most beloved and the most glorious frescoe created in our nation- telling us that Jesus of Nazareth, crucified on the cross, is risen from the tomb.

Let us rejoice and celebrate Christ's Resurrection "*For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself..., whether things on earth or things in heaven.*" (Colossians 1:19-20) We rejoice and celebrate the Victory above all victories, because in the Crucified and Resurrected One all of creation and all things – which through sin had succumbed

to the bondage of death – have now been renewed and saved! We rejoice and celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord Christ because in doing so we receive the pledge of our own victory over bondage to death and proclaim to the world the joy of life!

That, dear brothers and sisters, is the faith of the Orthodox Church which the Mileseva white Angel reveals to us, showing us the empty tomb of Christ, with the message: “Do not be afraid!” God has spoken these words of courage during various circumstances of individual and collective national trials, crucifixions, and struggles. “*Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you,*” said God to Israel through the prophet Moses. And He repeated the same to the New Israel through His Only-Begotten Son Who miraculously walked upon the waves of the sea, came to the apostles in the boat and calmed the storm: “*Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.*” (St. Mark 6:50) In the most terrible moment of the life of an elder of the Jewish synagogue, whose name was Jairus and whose daughter was dying, the Lord Jesus Christ also said: “Do not be afraid! Just believe!” because a faith which pervades and illuminates life’s path and which strengthens man’s being with its grace filled nourishment truly can accomplish everything.

This is best shown by the Gospel story about the inexhaustible faith and trust in Christ of four people who decided to do everything they could so that God would do that which is impossible for people, that is, a miracle, and heal their unbelieving sick friend. No external obstacle could stop them in their intention to bring the paralyzed to Christ (St. Mark 2: 1-5). Their faith was so great that, since it was impossible to approach the Lord because of the multitude of people gathered around the house where He was healing people, they brought the sick man to Christ by dismantling the roof and lowering him down before the Lord. All these events confirm the strength of joint ascetic struggle, the strength of the Church's prayer. The faith of a few people who have confidence in Christ is a force that helps even those who are weak in faith, and sometimes even those who have no faith. Precisely because of their strong faith in Him, in His love and final judgement, the Risen Lord was with our ancestors when they fell and rose again, when they mourned and rejoiced, when they migrated through the world's wastelands, were crucified, and immersed in the history of other nations.

Let's remember, dear spiritual children, the biblical story of Sodom and Gomorrah. Unlike the desert around the Dead Sea, those cities in the irrigated and green Jordan valley had the appearance of heavenly habitations. However, this advanced and attractive civilization was far from paradise. The inhabitants of these cities were immersed in a shameless way of life, alien to man's God-like image and hateful to God. The Lord had announced that he would destroy these cities so that

their swamp of sin would not swallow up the rest of the people. "Do you want to execute the righteous with the unrighteous?" - cried the righteous forefather Abraham and begged the Lord to spare these cities if he found at least fifty righteous people in them. But when he did not find even ten righteous souls in them, the Lord gave Sodom and Gomorrah over to destruction and ruin.

The biblical truth about Sodom and Gomorrah is still valid today. Economic and any other progress is certainly important for the societies in which our people live, but the spiritual health of our people is incomparably more important -- that strong, commonly-held faith in the Crucified and Resurrected Lord that shapes our entire national being. Our life values, culture, ethos, and identity depend on faith in the Resurrection of Christ and His Gospel. With the faith of the four, Christ healed the one who was spiritually and physically paralyzed due to sin. The Lord would have saved Sodom and Gomorrah if He had someone to rely on, if there had been people who, like the four in the Gospel, would be ready to help their friends with the power of faith and trust in Christ, with the power of prayer. With these examples, the Risen Lord reminds us through the mouth of the Church that our efforts in life are blessed and fruitful only if they are based on a faith held in common and on everything that springs from it, on prayer and ascetic struggle, on love and hope. Only when Christ is first will everything be in its place. Without Him, all our strivings are in vain. *"Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain,"* sang King David. (Psalm 127:1) Many righteous people throughout history have known this and have, with their lives and sufferings, testified to and understood the power of faith and the reality of God's presence in the world. Only if we have strong faith and prayer, true repentance and evangelical virtues, will God be with us and have someone to help, as Patriarch Pavle of blessed memory would say.

And just as the strength of faith and the prayers of our righteous ancestors and fathers led us through the narrow straits of history, so it is necessary that even today, in all hardships, we listen to the voice of the Church, the voice of God: let us unite and multiply our prayers for peace, for the preservation of Kosovo and Metohija in Serbia, for the preservation of our sanctuaries. Let us unite and multiply our prayers for the peaceful life of our people everywhere, so that our or anyone else's sufferings are not repeated. Know that the prayers of the believing people for peace, the prayers of the Church for peace, are stronger than any weapon. The hierarchs and faithful people of the Serbian Orthodox Church, which was first named the Patriarchate of Pec, are firmly and unchangingly of the opinion that the alienation of Kosovo and Metohija from the state of Serbia, directly or indirectly, de facto or de iure, is unacceptable. We pray to the Savior and advocate for a common life, in mutual respect and understanding with the Albanians of

Kosovo and Metohija, because if there is room in our souls for both, there will be room for everyone in Kosovo and Metohija. We also know that among our people even today there is enough faith, enough prayer and righteousness to preserve us and everything around us in the times to come.

Therefore, today we, the hierarchs of the Patriarchate of Peć and Belgrade-Karlovci, that is, the Serbian Orthodox Church, appeal that the progress of society, and above all national education and culture, be built on the foundations of the Gospel, on which they were created. We especially call for the preservation of the Serbian language and the Cyrillic alphabet, on which the Serbian culture was built. We appeal to standardize the use of the Cyrillic alphabet in public space, as well as to stop the violence against the Serbian language and to abolish the provisions of the laws which impose that violence, especially the unconstitutional law that imposes so-called gender-sensitive language, behind which is hidden the fight against marriage and the family as established by God's sacred and natural forms of human personal and common life. We have built our way of life, our ethos, and our value system upon the Gospel as its foundation, in which marriage and family, based on love for God and love for one another, are the premises of harmony in the life of the nation, society and state.

Dear children of the Church established by Saint Sava, we pray for peace in Ukraine, for an end to the suffering and conflict between brothers of the same faith and of the same blood, so that enmity and hatred will be replaced by friendship and love. Today we pray to the Risen Lord especially for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, its hierarchy, and its faithful people, who are exposed to injustice, violence and persecution. All of us together, both when we suffer and when we rejoice, dear brothers and sisters, must never forget the fact that the final answer and the key to life is in Christ's words: "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world." (St. John 16:33) Therefore, together with the angels, let us sing a song of victory:

Christ is risen from the dead,  
trampling down death by death  
and upon those in the tombs  
bestowing life!

We wish a happy, virtuous, and blessed Feast of feasts to all our faithful people, to all who hear the words of the White Angel: "Do not be afraid! You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, Who was crucified. He is risen, He is not here." Wherever any of us may be today, we greet each other with a greeting of eternal joy:

**Christ is Risen!**

Given at the Serbian Patriarchate in Belgrade at Pascha 2023.

Your intercessors before the Resurrected Christ:

**Archbishop of Pec,  
Metropolitan of Belgrade-Karlovci and  
Serbian Patriarch PORFIRIJE**

Metropolitan of Dabro-Bosna **CHRYSOSTOM**  
Metropolitan of Montenegro and the Coastlands **JOANIKIJE**  
Bishop of Srem **VASILIJE**  
Bishop of Banja Luka **JEFREM**  
Bishop of Budim **LUKIJAN**  
Bishop of Banat **NIKANOR**  
Bishop of New Gracanica-Midwestern America **LONGIN**  
Bishop of Canada **MITROPHAN**  
Bishop of Backa **IRINEJ**  
Bishop of Great Britain and Scandinavia **DOSITEJ**  
Bishop of Zicha **JUSTIN**  
Bishop of Vranje **PAHOMIJE**  
Bishop of Sumadija **JOVAN**  
Bishop of Branicevo **IGNATIJE**  
Bishop of Zvornik-Tuzla **FOTIJE**  
Bishop of Mileseva **ATANASIJE**  
Bishop of Düsseldorf and Germany **GRIGORIJE**  
Bishop of Ras and Prizren **TEODOSIJE**  
Bishop of Western America **MAXIM**  
Bishop of Gornji Karlovac **GERASIM**  
Bishop of Eastern America **IRINEJ**  
Bishop of Krusevac **DAVID**  
Bishop of Slavonia **JOVAN**  
Bishop of Austria and Switzerland **ANDREJ**  
Bishop of Bihac-Petrovac **SERGIJE**  
Bishop of Timok **ILARION**  
Bishop of Nis **ARSENIJE**  
Bishop of Buenos Aires and South Central America **KIRILO**  
Bishop of Australia and New Zealand Metropolitanate **SILUAN**  
Bishop of Dalmatia **NIKODIM**  
Bishop of Osek-Polje and Baranja **HERUVIM**  
Bishop of Valjevo **ISIHJE**  
Bishop of Budim and Niksic **METODIJE**  
Bishop of Zahumlje and Hercegovina **DIMITRIJE**  
Bishop of Sabac **JEROTEJ**  
Bishop of Western Europe **JUSTIN**  
Vicar Bishop of Moravica **ANTONIJE**

Vicar Bishop of Remezijan **STEFAN**  
Vicar Bishop of Mohac **DAMASKIN**  
Vicar Bishop of Marcha **SAVA**  
Vicar Bishop of Hum **JOVAN**  
Vicar Bishop of Hvostan **ALEKSEI**  
Vicar Bishop of Novo Brdo **ILARION**  
Vicar Bishop of Jegarski **NEKTARIJE**  
Vicar Bishop of Lipljane **DOSITEJ**  
Vicar Bishop of Toplica **PETAR**

**THE ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF OCHRID:**

Archbishop of Ochrid and Metropolitan of Skoplje **JOVAN**  
Bishop of Polog and Kumanovo **JOAKIM**  
Bishop of Bregalnica **MARKO**  
Vicar Bishop of Stobi **DAVID**

[Path of Orthodoxy translation]