

PASCHA 2006

Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen!

To the Very Reverend and Reverend Clergy, Monastics, and Faithful
of The Orthodox Church in America

This is the day of resurrection! Let us be illumined by the Feast!
Let us embrace each other! Let us call ‘brothers’ even those that hate us,
and forgive all by the resurrection! (The Paschal Stikhiri)

Dearly Beloved in Christ,

As we began our journey to Pascha, we approached one another, seeking and offering forgiveness as that essential first step on the road of repentance. Today, as we celebrate the completion of our journey, we celebrate that forgiveness which comes from the empty tomb, that forgiveness which tears down the walls of separation and challenges us to embrace friend and foe alike for the sake of the One Who invites us to partake of His divine nature.

Far from being a celebration of events past, our proclamation of the Resurrection is rooted in an event that transcends time and space. As such, we literally participate in a reality that is ever-present, that knows “no sunset,” that unites that which has gone before us with that which is yet to come in a timeless celebration of the most perfect example and experience of love revealed to mankind. We, at one and the same time, stand with the women at the entrance to the sepulcher and in the midst of the eternal Kingdom of God. Our hearts are illumined. Our eyes are opened as the risen Savior challenges us to look beyond the cares and sorrows of this world to the joys promised in the life of the world to come. Our envy and passions, our pride and hatred are rendered meaningless as we partake of the eternal victory and new life so freely offered to us by Christ, the eternal Victor.

Just as our journey began with the call to seek and to offer forgiveness, so too the true joy of Holy Pascha is fulfilled in forgiveness. Our Savior makes no compromise in this regard. The Holy Fathers remind us that the warm fire of God’s love indeed purifies and purges us when we reach out to one another in love; at the same time, it torments us when our hearts remain cold, when we seek forgiveness yet fail to offer it, when we refuse to embrace others with that “holy kiss” of forgiveness, even for the sake of the Resurrection.

To say that we live in unsettled times, filled with anger and hatred, is an understatement. News and images of war and fear, inhumanity and death, flash before our eyes every day. The world sees aggression as a sign of strength, forgiveness and reconciliation as a sign of weakness. Yet, in the midst of such



chaos, the light of the empty tomb shines forth in those who embrace the risen Savior, the Light of the world “Who can never be overcome by darkness” and Who challenges us to let our light shine before mankind.

May we be accounted worthy of our calling by offering to one and all that divine forgiveness Our Lord so abundantly grants to those who accept – and offer – it. And may the eternal joy of His Kingdom consume us here and now, even as we anticipate the fulfillment of all things in the Risen Christ.

With love in the Risen Lord,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Herman", preceded by a small cross symbol.

+ **HERMAN**
Archbishop of Washington and New York
Metropolitan of All America and Canada