



# Christ Is Risen!

April 20, 2025  
Protocol 04/001

To the clergy, monastics, and faithful of the Orthodox Church in America, beloved children in the Lord,

Christ is risen! Indeed he is risen!

“This is the chosen and holy day, first of sabbaths, king and lord of days, the feast of feasts, holy day of holy days. On this day we bless Christ forevermore.”

So we sang at Matins, at the eighth ode of the Paschal canon. St. John of Damascus, the author of that canon, calls today “the feast of feasts,” and as we celebrate this feast of feasts, this first and greatest of feasts, we might ask a seemingly simple question: what are feasts, and why do we celebrate them? This question seems particularly appropriate as the world around us grows ever more chaotic and complex. In the midst of all the change and busy-ness, how can we spare the time just to celebrate and do nothing of use?

Many of us are familiar with the Russian festal greeting, *s prazdnikom*. The key word here is *prazdnik*, the Russian word for feast or holiday, which derives in turn from the adjective *prazdny*, meaning “empty,” and hence “idle.” But this emptiness, or idleness, is not merely an expression of absence. The feast has positive content, but this content is not man-made: it is something made by God, something that our inaction allows us encounter and appreciate. Feasts are days on which we remain idle so that God can act; they are days that we empty of our own works so that we can fill them with the remembrance of the things of God: his deeds, his presence, his glory.

After all, as the Lord says, the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath (Mk. 2:27). We abused our freewill, sinned, and lost the continual enjoyment of God, instead being cursed to eat by the sweat of our brow (Gen. 3:19). But God, in his mercy, has given us the feast day, a day on which we are able to return to our Edenic state. We set aside the labor that is the result of our sin and, for a day at

least, devote ourselves to true rest, to the one thing needful: worship in spirit and truth, whose hour is coming and now is (Lk. 10:42, Jn. 4:23). As we sang at the canon, the feast is the day on which we bless Christ forevermore.

The feast day, in this way, becomes an icon of the deified person, filled with the divine energies—God's activity, rather than his own. The saints empty their hearts, their lives, their being, of everything worldly and passionate so that God can dwell there as his holy temple. The feast is also thus an icon of the life to come, in which the elect will no longer know toil or care, but only the never-ending banquet of the kingdom, the ceaseless heavenly worship of the one God in Trinity.

Thus, on this first of sabbaths, I pray that we might all set aside our Lenten labors and rejoice in the day which the Lord has made, Bright Sunday, his great and holy Pascha (Ps. 117:24). Following in the footsteps of our self-emptying Master, we worked for six weeks to cleanse our hearts and lives of everything unbecoming, not so that we could be empty, but so we could be filled, according to our own measure and capacity, with the grace that Christ brings into the world through his life-creating Resurrection. Christ rested after his six days of labor, and now after our six weeks of Lenten work, he calls us to enter into his rest, to find our peace in him and the great salvation that he has wrought for us upon the Wood.

Christ is risen, the Peace of God, the divine Peace himself, and so, in the midst of a busy and whirling world, we find everlasting peace on his feast of feasts. May the grace, peace, and joy of his Resurrection abide with all of you, always, now and throughout the ages to come.

Greeting you with festal cheer and Paschal rejoicing, and assuring you of my primatial prayers and blessing, I remain,

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a cross followed by a stylized, cursive name that appears to be 'Tikhon'.

+Tikhon  
Archbishop of Washington  
Metropolitan of All America and Canada