



**The Serbian Orthodox Church
to her spiritual children at Pascha, 2026**

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!

The Word of God, the Gospel of Christ, the spiritual treasury of the Church of God—out of which, by the right hand of the Lord, the seeds of eternal life are sown into our hearts—is filled with truths hidden in God. These are not abstract ideas, but words that are fulfilled in our lives. Among them are also those words by which the Lord warns us of times when peace will be taken from the earth (cf. Rev. 6:3–4), when we shall hear of wars and rumors of wars, for nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom (cf. Matt. 24:6–7; Luke 21:9–10).

These words, which to many generations of our forefathers sounded as a warning and a foretelling of times to come, have today become the reality in which we live. We see unrest among nations, we hear of wars and rumors of wars, and we are witnesses to conflicts, suffering, and uncertainty in the world. While the skies are torn by the trails of rockets of death, and in the ears of troubled humanity echo the sounds of sirens announcing destruction and suffering, from the depths of the empty Tomb of Christ there is heard the voice of the angel, a witness of the Resurrection, who proclaims to the myrrh-bearing women—and through them to all of us, and to every human being: “Do not be afraid!” (Matt. 28:5). Fear is not driven away from us only by the angel, but even more so by Him who has abolished the fear of death, for death is the very root of all fear. By His death trampling down death, the Risen God-Man Christ also speaks to us, saying: “Do not be afraid!” (Matt. 28:10). Thus strengthened, we know that the frightening events of our days are not the final word of history, but a call to vigilance and to be firmly established in God.

What do the signs of our times tell us today? Although the empty Tomb of Christ has conquered the power of every grave and revealed that no tomb has the final word, still in history and in our present reality there remain living tombs—filled with hatred, selfishness, passions, and self-love. We recognize them in the darkened hearts of men, in boundless self-centeredness, in media that spread falsehood, in wars, and in all our passions and sins against the love of God. These tombs, despite the Resurrection of Christ, continually distort and defile life itself, which is the priceless gift of divine love.

One of the most striking examples of such a reality is this: the consequences of today’s global crisis are, tragically, measured by cold economic indicators, by the standards of earthly

merchants (cf. Rev. 18:3)—financial losses, disruptions, and declines in markets and exchanges—while in the deep shadow of such calculations remain human tragedies: the death of the innocent, the suffering of children, and the misery of millions. Such a perspective, in which material gain is placed above human life, has not only led to wars and injustices—it is strengthened by them. This is a great defeat for us as human beings.

The world in which we live grows ever more unstable, and man ever more fearful. Systems of values are being deliberately and forcibly changed, and in the direction of anti-values. Promises and covenants once solemnly made are trampled without shame. The awareness of such betrayals gives rise to violence and ever greater divisions among nations, while political and cultural divisions deepen. Upon the ruins of dying civilizations there flourishes a spiritual uncertainty and a loss of meaning.

Why, then, in this all-encompassing darkness, is the Risen Lord neither recognized nor seen? The answer is already given in the Gospel itself. Even the disciples and closest followers of the Risen God-Man Christ did not at once recognize Him. Mary Magdalene saw Him near the empty Tomb yet did not know that it was the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. John 20:14). She recognized Him only when He called her by name: “Mary!” (John 20:16). Likewise, the Apostles Luke and Cleopas did not recognize the Lord (cf. Luke 24:16) on the road to Emmaus, but only “in the breaking of the bread” (cf. Luke 24:35), when the Lord made Himself known to them.

Nor did the apostles recognize Him when He stood on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias, watching their fruitless fishing (cf. John 21:4). They came to know Him only after, in obedience to His word, they cast the net on the right side of the boat and caught a great multitude of fish (John 21:6–7). They recognized Him in the miracle—as in a spiritual space where the power of God and the faith of man meet and embrace.

Neither did they recognize Him at once in their gatherings behind closed doors: at one time, in fear, they thought they saw a spirit (cf. Luke 24:37); at another, they believed through the wounds of the nails and the spear, and thus came to know the reality of the Resurrection and His living presence (cf. John 20:27). The Risen God-Man Christ stood among them, yet they were not able to recognize Him immediately by the ordinary human means known to them. This mystery of not recognizing Him has not remained merely an event of the distant past, bound to the first days after the Savior’s Resurrection—it is a reality that endures even to this day.

In order to see and recognize the Risen Lord, ordinary human sight is not sufficient. What is required is a new, spiritual vision—a gift from above, an experience of the Holy Spirit. In other words, we must enter a living relationship with Him, that He Himself may grant us the knowledge of His Person. Thus the Lord, in the end, opened the eyes of His disciples Luke and Cleopas and gave them spiritual sight to recognize Him (cf. Luke 24:31), and to the apostles gathered behind closed doors He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the prophecies of the Holy Scriptures (cf. Luke 24:45) and all that was to be fulfilled in Him.

That the Risen Christ was not immediately recognized does not mean that He was hiding Himself from men, but rather that He honored their freedom. In this way He once again revealed and confirmed that which was given to man from the beginning: the freedom to choose God, and

from that freedom to believe in Him and to serve Him. Christ did not impose the truth of the Resurrection upon the human race but placed it within the realm of faith. What would have happened had the Risen One appeared to Pilate, stood before the Sanhedrin, or shown Himself in the marketplaces of Jerusalem? Then the glad tidings of the Resurrection would have become a demonstration of power and force, and the truth itself would, in a sense, have been imposed. Instead, the Lord reveals Himself to those who love Him, thereby establishing new ways of recognizing and receiving the true life.

What, then, are these ways, and how can the contemporary man experience this reality? Above all, he experiences it as a personal encounter with God, in which the Risen Lord calls him by name, as He revealed Himself to Mary Magdalene. Without a personal life of prayer and ascetic striving, it is not possible either to know God or to recognize Him. He also experiences it as communion, as participation in the Eucharistic assembly, receiving the Body and Blood of Christ in the Divine Liturgy. Like Luke and Cleopas, man receives from the very hands of Christ—through the hands of His ministers—the Bread which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. And finally, he experiences it through obedience to the Word of God and through the reality of miracle, like the apostles who, on the Sea of Tiberias, came to understand that all things in the Risen God-Man are wondrous and saving.

Miracles are not only extraordinary events, nor merely great divine interventions in history. The parting of the Red Sea was indeed a miracle. But it is also a miracle when we forgive and break the cycle of hatred. This is not merely a moral demand or an abstract principle—it is a manifestation of the Resurrection and a participation in its power and glory. Vengeance is a crucifixion without resurrection, while unforgiveness and hatred are death and a tomb sealed forever. Therefore, the Resurrection is not only an event belonging to the past, but a reality into which we enter each time we forgive, each time we do not return blow for blow, and each time we recognize a brother in our enemy. Then we choose life instead of death. Then the stone is rolled away from our own inner tomb.

We also recognize the Lord in every human suffering—of which, sadly, there is so much—and in every poor, rejected, and despised person, encountering Him in them through active love. For the Risen Lord Jesus Christ has said: “As you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me” (Matt. 25:40).

It is precisely in this that we see that faith in the Resurrection is not merely an inner conviction, but a power that shapes our relationship toward our neighbors—toward every human being as an icon of God.

Today, with particular care and concern, we pray for our brothers and sisters in Kosovo and Metohija, the centuries-old historical fountain and spiritual heart of Serbia and the Serbian people. We share directly in all the trials and challenges they continually face, strengthening them to persevere in their witness and to remain faithful to their Church, to their faith, and to themselves. At the same time, we remind each and every one among us that it is not enough merely to love Kosovo and Metohija. This love must be made manifest in deeds—in concrete care for our neighbors, in works of brotherly mercy, in concern for children and for all who are in need. We must not allow the consciousness of our people to be shaped in such a way that the

Serbs of Kosovo and Metohija are seen as an obstacle to some supposed better future life. Without them—without our Serbian brethren of Kosovo and Metohija, without the Serbs of Old Serbia—there can be no better life for any of us. For we are all one people and one Body in Christ, united by the same faith and the same suffering, but also by the same hope and the same glorification.

From such faith and such communion, beloved spiritual children, let us enter into the joy of the Resurrection and say: “Having beheld the Resurrection of Christ, let us worship the holy Lord Jesus, the only Sinless One,” and with the Holy Apostle Paul let us cry out: “O death, where is thy sting? O Hades, where is thy victory?” (1 Cor. 15:55). Comforted by the power and grace of this great and radiant Feast of feasts—the new and holy Pascha, the great and blameless Pascha, the mystical Pascha which has opened unto us the gates of Paradise—let us embrace one another and say even to those who hate us: Brothers! And at the end, which is also the beginning, let us sing together with one voice: *Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life.*

We greet you all with the all-victorious and all-joyful greeting:

Christ is Risen!

Given at the Serbian Patriarchate in Belgrade at Pascha 2026.

Your intercessors before the Resurrected Christ:

Archbishop of Pec, Metropolitan of Belgrade-Karlovci, and Serbian Patriarch PORFIRIJE
 Archbishop of Sarajevo and Metropolitan of Dabro-Bosna CHRYSOSTOM
 Archbishop of Cetinje and Metropolitan of Montenegro and the Coastlands JOANIKIJE
 Archbishop of Sirmija and Metropolitan of Srem VASILIJE
 Archbishop and Metropolitan of Banja Luka JEFREM
 Archbishop and Metropolitan of Budim LUKIJAN
 Archbishop of Vrsac and Metropolitan of Banat NIKANOR
 Archbishop of New Gracanica and Chicago and Metropolitan of Midwestern America LONGIN
 Archbishop of Toronto and Metropolitan of Canada MITROPHAN
 Archbishop of Novi Sad and Metropolitan of Backa IRINEJ
 Archbishop of Stockholm and Metropolitan of Scandinavia DOSITEJ
 Archbishop and Metropolitan of Zicha JUSTIN
 Archbishop and Metropolitan of Vranje PAHOMIJE
 Archbishop of Kragujevac and Metropolitan of Sumadija JOVAN
 Archbishop of Pozarevac and Metropolitan of Branicevo IGNATIJE
 Archbishop and Metropolitan of Zvornik-Tuzla FOTIJE
 Archbishop and Metropolitan of Mileseva ATANASIJE
 Archbishop of Düsseldorf-Berlin and Metropolitan of Germany GRIGORIJE
 Archbishop and Metropolitan of Ras and Prizren TEODOSIJE
 Archbishop and Metropolitan of Krusevac DAVID
 Archbishop of Romul-Zajecar and Metropolitan of Timok ILARION
 Archbishop and Metropolitan of Nis ARSENIJE
 Archbishop of Sydney-Wellington and Metropolitan of Australia-New Zealand SILUAN
 Archbishop Zadar-Sibenik and Metropolitan of Dalmatia NIKODIM
 Archbishop and Metropolitan of Budimlje-Niksic METODIJE
 Archbishop of Mostar-Trebinje and Metropolitan of Zahum-Herzegovina and Ston-Coastland DIMITRIJE
 Archbishop of Los Angeles and Western America MAXIM
 Archbishop of Gornji Karlovac GERASIM

Bishop of Washington-New York and Eastern America IRINEJ
Bishop of Pakrac and Slavonia JOVAN
Bishop of Switzerland ANDREJ
Bishop of Bihac-Petrovac SERGIJE
Bishop of Buenos Aires and South-Central America KIRILO
Bishop of Osek-Polje and Baranja HERUVIM
Bishop of Valjevo ISIHJE
Bishop of Sabac JEROTEJ
Bishop of Paris and Western Europe JUSTIN
Bishop of London and Great Britain-Ireland NEKTARIJE

Retired Bishop of Zvornik-Tuzla VASILJE
Retired Bishop of Canada GEORGIJE
Retired Bishop of Central Europe KONSTANTIN
Retired Bishop of Slavonija SAVA
Retired Bishop of Mileseva FILARET
Retired Bishop of Nis JOVAN

Vicar Bishop of Remezijan STEFAN
Vicar Bishop of Mohac DAMASKIN
Vicar Bishop of Marca SAVA
Vicar Bishop of Hum JOVAN
Vicar Bishop of Hvostan ALEKSEJ
Vicar Bishop of Novo Brdo ILARION
Vicar Bishop of Lipljane DOSITEJ
Vicar Bishop of Toplica PETAR
Vicar Bishop of Jenopolje NIKON
Vicar Bishop of Moravica TIHON
Vicar Bishop of Dioklia PAJSIJE
Vicar Bishop of Kostajnica SERAFIM