

The Orthodox Church in America
DIOCESE OF EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA
The Right Reverend Tikhon, Bishop of Philadelphia

PASCHA 2006

To the Venerable Pastors, God-loving Monastics and
Devout Faithful of the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania

*The day of resurrection, be illumined, you people, Pascha, the Pascha of the Lord.
From death to life and from earth to heaven, Christ our God has brought us,
singing a song of victory. (Paschal Canon, Ode I)*

Dearly Beloved in the Lord:

The radiant day of the resurrection of Christ has risen upon us, shining with the light of the Lord's victory over hell, corruption and death itself. His victory is also our victory, for by the divine Pascha of the Lord, we who are mortal and earthly have been brought *from death to life and from earth to heaven*.

As we face a life that is so often filled with darkness, sorrow and temptation, it is easy to become discouraged, to lose hope and to waver in our faith. Our Lenten journey has offered each of us the opportunity to courageously rekindle that hope and that faith by laboring in the good spiritual effort of repentance, prayer and fasting. Now, having walked with Christ on the path to the Cross, we have received a share in His glory: *Yesterday, O Christ, I was buried with Thee, and today I rise again with Thee, in Thy rising. Yesterday I was crucified with Thee, now glorify me, O Savior, in Thy Kingdom* (Paschal Canon, Ode III).

The light and joy of the present feast are a clear and certain reminder that the Lord is ever with us, even in our darkest moments of pain and struggle. The Risen Christ Himself makes manifest to us the reality that there is no darkness that can overcome Him or those who are His children, for He is *the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world* (John 1:9).

As we celebrate the Feast of Feasts, let us all receive that light in our hearts and rejoice in the Lord with thanksgiving for His great victory, crying out:

Christ is risen! Indeed He is risen!

+ TIKHON
Bishop of Philadelphia and Eastern Pennsylvania