



## Paschal Message 2020

Christ is risen!

Dear brothers and sisters,

I greet you all on this Feast of Feasts, on which, as the service tells us, all is filled with light, Heaven and earth, even the netherworld, and at which not just mankind rejoices, but also the angels, all creation, visible and invisible.

Every year on these holy days throughout the whole of Orthodox Christendom the faithful gather together in Churches, and in multitudes glorify our risen Lord in triumphant Paschal hymnody. But not this year. By God's inscrutable permission the epidemic which is raging throughout the world, and the conditions associated with it, deprive many of us of this possibility. They deprive us of the triumphant festive services and even the common festal table, but they must not deprive us of Paschal joy in the Risen Christ, for nothing, *neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8. 38-39).*

Having been deprived of the triumphal, but passing, side of our celebration on this *feast of feasts and festival of festivals*, which we along with all Orthodox Christendom have eagerly awaited, and for which we have prepared ourselves with prayer, fasting and abstinence, we may wonder, might it not be better to seek, to attain, and to celebrate that lasting Pascha which should abide in the heart of every true Christian who truly lives in the Risen Christ, and in whom there truly lives the Risen Christ?

Having attained this Pascha, and living it, St Seraphim was able, year round, without any pretence, to greet everyone with the Paschal greeting *Christ is risen*.

No matter how far beyond our experience and comprehension such an abiding Pascha may be, no matter how unattainable it may seem, it can only be a foretaste of the eternal Pascha of *the unwaning day* of Christ's kingdom, to which we are all called. Therein we can become partakers of heavenly life and heirs of God. Therein our troubled soul will find peace and rest. Therein the fleeting instant of our transient existence will find itself eternity. Through it, from the depths of our nothingness, we are propelled into the infinite and eternal, for which we were first created.

May Christ, the Pre-eternal Wisdom, Word and Power of God, the Creator of all, Who took upon Himself the form of a servant, and Who for our sake suffered crucifixion and rose from the dead, becoming the firstborn of the dead, enlighten our minds with the Light of His Resurrection, strengthen our hearts always to do His will, keep us in His Truth, and lead us into the *unwaning day of His Kingdom*, that we may truly partake of that, which *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him (1 Cor. 2:9).*

Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!



John, Bishop of Caracas and South America