

## CHRIST IS RISEN



## TRULY, HE IS RISEN

My beloved Parishioners and Friends,

The week following the Resurrection of our Lord is known as Bright Week (Διακαινήσιμος εβδομάδα). As explained by the Weblog, *Mystagogy, Bright Week, otherwise known as Renewal Week, begins on Pascha Sunday and ends on the following Sunday of Thomas. The name probably originates from the fact that the newly baptized catechumens from Pascha are newly illumined and bright. For them it is a time of regeneration and renewal. These newly baptized in ancient times wore all white for a week, hence the week sometimes being called White Week. The seven days of Bright Week are seen as one day, a continuous Pascha celebration. According to the 66th canon of the Council in Trullo: "From the holy day of the Resurrection of Christ our God until New Sunday (i.e. Thomas Sunday) for a whole week the faithful in the holy churches should continually be repeating psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, rejoicing and celebrating Christ, and attending to the reading of the Divine Scriptures and delighting in the Holy Mysteries. For in this way shall we be exalted with Christ; raised up together with Him. For this reason on the aforesaid days that by no means there be any horse races or any other public spectacle." Furthermore, because of the continuous paschal celebration, there should be no fasting this week. And as the above canon states, this is a time of renewal for all Orthodox Christians and not just the newly baptized. It is a time for the faithful to bear spiritual fruit and generate new virtues for our own illumination as well.*

As such, "Pascha is the inauguration of a new age. It reveals the mystery of the eighth day. It is our taste, in this age, of the new and unending day of the Kingdom of God. Something of this new and unending day is conveyed to us in the length of the paschal services, in the repetition of the paschal order for all the services of bright week, and in the special paschal features retained in the services for the forty days until Ascension. Forty days are, as it were, treated as one day. Together

they comprise the symbol of the new time in which the Church lives and toward which she ever draws the faithful, from one degree of glory to another.”

It was, undoubtedly, difficult for us all, to celebrate Pascha away from the church and one another, with less than a handful of faithful in church for any given service. Yet, we rejoice knowing that “God is everywhere present and fills all things.” As Scripture tells us, “On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” (John 20:19). The doors were locked, yet He appeared to them. Truly, no barriers exist that can separate us from our Risen Lord, except a heart closed to His presence. Whether in church that evening or in our homes, we greeted the Risen Lord with lighted candles, expressing our boundless joy in His victory over sin and death, a victory that He shares with us, as so brilliantly explained by St. Paul in his First Epistle to the Corinthians (I Cor. 15:1-58).

Allow me, beloved, to take this opportunity to thank our Parish Council members, especially our President, Con Sofologis, for working so diligently to bring our Holy Week and Pascha services to you via the internet and, for keeping everything on an even keel during these difficult times. My gratitude to Fr. Michael Kontogiorgis for celebrating some of the services for me. My heartfelt thanks to Deacon Harry Chelpon who serves for us at Holy Apostles with abundant diligence, kindness and love for our parish. Our choir director and Sunday School director, Bret and Denise Lansdell, did an incredible job as chanters for all the services. We were allowed only one altar server per service by mandate of the Holy Synod (with the stipulation they be 18 years and over). My gratitude to Angelo Dacey and Luke Kendrat for accepting the challenge to cover alternately all the services. I also appreciate Anna Maria and Christina Kendrat for assisting us on Holy Friday and Saturday with the chanting. Our gratitude to the Epitaphios Committee for all the beautiful floral decorations that adorned our church from Palm Sunday to Pascha. Finally, my thanks to all of you, our faithful parishioners and friends, who prayed with us from your homes, watched the services on line, and had the kindness to continue your monetary support of our parish. Let us pray that we shall never again be separated physically from our church during such great and holy days, and that the dangers of this pandemic will soon subside, allowing us to return to our church home and together, with one voice and heart, chant from the depths of our being, Christ is Risen!

With love in our Risen Lord,  
Fr. George A. Alexson