



МОНРЕАЛЬСКАЯ И КАНАДСКАЯ ЕПАРХІЯ
РУССКОЙ ПРАВОСЛАВНОЙ ЦЕРКВИ ЗАГРЯНИЦЕЙ

DIOCÈSE DE MONTRÉAL ET DU CANADA • L'ÉGLISE RUSSE ORTHODOXE HORS FRONTIÈRES
DIOCESE OF MONTREAL AND CANADA • RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE OF RUSSIA

ЕПАРХІАЛЬНАЯ КАНЦЕЛЯРІЯ
DIOCESAN CHANCELLERY

EASTER EPISTLE

To the clergy and God-saved flock of the Diocese of Canada
Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ!

CHRIST IS RISEN!

With all my heart I greet you with the Feast of Feasts, the Glorious Resurrection of Christ, and pray for each of you to be granted Paschal joy, peace and wellbeing.

Of all the feasts celebrated by the Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, the most joyous, most triumphant is the Feast of the Pascha of the Lord, the Unconquerable Victory over the powers of hell and death. So that we all, after Christ's Resurrection, set our trust in our own resurrection, and life everlasting. And "trust", as St John of Tobolsk puts it, "is higher than hope, it transcends hope".

This year, however, our Easter joy is inseparably linked with the "godly sorrow", as St Paul says in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians: "For godly sorrow works repentance unto salvation" (2 Cor 7:10).

By order of the civil authorities all public worship in our churches is temporarily suspended. We follow this order, since, if we were to break it, we would, besides running the danger of falling victim to the illness ourselves, risk becoming an unwitting cause of meaningless death of our kinsfolk – may God preserve us from this! We ourselves are doing all we can to stop the pestilence from entering the homes of our parishioners. But this does not mean the services in the churches of our Diocese have ceased. They are continuing, but only the clergy who celebrate them are allowed in (not more than two celebrants in some provinces). Through God's providence, many people are able to follow these on the internet, and thus, in these difficult circumstances, are given a chance to create house Churches in their homes. Therefore, beloved brothers and sisters, do keep in mind the words of Our Risen Lord Jesus Christ: go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly (Mt 6:6).

At this time it would be good to speak of miraculous events which took place in the island of Corfu long time ago. The black plague that was raging in neighbouring Italy and other countries of Europe, reached Corfu in 1629. The terrible news spread quickly across the island. Despite strict quarantine, the number of people stricken with the disease grew. Then the Orthodox, having assembled in the church of St Spyridon, prayed for the deliverance from the cruel pestilence. And the plague retreated. By Palm Sunday of 1630 the epidemic has

ceased completely, while elsewhere in Europe thousands were still dying from the disease. On the same day of the Feast of the Entry of Our Lord into Jerusalem a solemn procession went through the streets in gratitude for the miracle wrought by the Supreme Physician of our souls and bodies through the prayers of the Holy Hierarch Spyridon.

Let us implore Our Risen Lord to be swiftly delivered from this cruel pestilence, remembering the words of St John of Kronstadt: "Wars, illnesses and other calamities are but medicines in the hands of most merciful Heavenly Father... When the Lord strikes you with sore affliction, or sickness, or misfortune, then be assured that He will also truly send you consolation, and will afterwards bestow upon you the grace of peace, strength, and joy corresponding to your previous sufferings. For 'the Lord is full of compassion and mercy, long-suffering, and of great goodness. He will not always be wrathful... He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our wickednesses' (Ps 102:8-11)".

Dear brothers and sisters! May Our Risen Lord grant us all, in our present condition, to celebrate this Glorious Feast in good health and spiritual joy.

"Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, as we have set our hope on Thee" (Ps 32:22).

Christ is Risen indeed!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Archbishop Gabriel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

GABRIEL
Archbishop of Montreal and Canada