

**Paschal Epistle to the God-loving Flock of the Trenton and North American
Diocese and to the Faithful Sons and Daughters in the Diaspora**

CHRIST IS RISEN!

During the last days of this week, the Church reverently made remembrance of the great sacrifice of our Redeemer, Who endured suffering and death “for the life and salvation of the world”. But this redemptive and mystical feat of Christ God and His descent into hades was not understood by the Disciples of Christ, who had not yet been enlightened by the Holy Spirit. According to their understanding, such things could not happen to their beloved and omnipotent Teacher!

For them, Jesus Christ was **everything – life and joy! And suddenly He is no longer!** It is impossible for us to imagine the extent of the depression and frenzy; in what a state of shock the Disciples of Christ found themselves, upon seeing their dear Teacher and Lord as One dead, lying in the grave. Due to human weakness, they could not contain the words of the Lord, spoken just one day before: *“And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.”* (Jn.16:22).

It is quite likely that we, in a manner similar to the Disciples, are currently experiencing a certain sadness upon seeing the apostasy that surrounds us. Which of our hearts does not ache seeing the mass departure from the Truth of Christ, from His Holy Church? But one must not be troubled or succumb to sadness; these people can be pitied and **must** be pitied, but we must not become saddened on this light-bearing day of Pascha, nor on any other day. Everything that happens, happens as God permits.

Just as for the Disciples of Christ, likewise for us all the Lord Jesus Christ is **everything – our life and our joy!** *“Brethren, rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.”*(Philip.4:4). **For Christ has risen, eternal rejoicing!**

INDEED CHRIST IS RISEN!

+*Bishop Stefan*

Pascha 2018