



Reverend Fathers, Venerable Monastics, and Pious Faithful
of the Western American Diocese ROCOR:

Precious Children of the Church, my beloved flock:

CHRIST IS RISEN!

Today we bear witness to the Resurrection of Christ and cry out from the depths of our hearts with joy. There is no other response that is possible for man, beholding the defeat of death, except joy, and we will never cease to experience it so long as we are faithful in following Him.

Our world is not accustomed to joy. We have grown used to suffering and sorrow, and we see so much of it around us. Of course, we must not only see it outside ourselves, but within: Judas, Caiphas, Herod, Pilate... the figures of such betrayal and hatred, whose stories we have heard throughout Passion Week, are still very much alive in us, through our sins. Within our cold hearts, their evil continues to be perpetrated in the world. We cannot merely blame others: apostasy is borne from within.

However, today we see how it is defeated. The “Good Thief” is redeemed by a word – *“Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in Paradise”*, Luke 23:43. St. Peter the Apostle is restored to the love of Christ, Whom he had betrayed – as seen in John 21:15-17, where it narrates how Jesus asked Peter three times if Peter loved Him, pointing to the rehabilitation of Peter following his repentance. Hell itself, which had so long seemed to conquer man, is today destroyed. Faithfulness to the Eternal Son brings eternal life—the antidote to the sin that is within us.

Let us share this message with the world: where there is sorrow, joy can flourish. Where there is death, there can be life. Where there has been hatred, there can be love. These stem from the one reality that today changes the universe itself: *Christ is risen! Truly, He is Risen!*

+ Archbishop Kirill

15/28 April 2019