



Melkite Catholic Eparchy of Australia, New Zealand and All Oceania

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The Most Reverend
ROBERT RABBAT
by the Mercy of God

Melkite Greek-Catholic Eparchy of Australia, New Zealand and All Oceania,

to the Clergy, the Religious and All the Faithful of our Holy Eparchy

a Pastoral Letter for Easter, Holy & Glorious Pascha, 2025.

“This is the day the Lord has made – a day far different from those made when the world was first created and which are measured by the passage of time. This is the beginning of a new creation.” (St Gregory of Nyssa)

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Risen Lord, our Sure and Certain Hope,

Once more a merciful Providence has brought us safely to the celebration of Easter, the Holy and Glorious Pascha of the Lord; and that in itself is reason to be thankful. We note also that this year the Catholic Church is celebrating a Jubilee Year, the theme of which is Hope. Two other significant facts also set this year apart, the concurrence of the two Easters, Catholic and Orthodox; and the seventeen hundredth anniversary of the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea in AD 325.

As we have often noted, our world in many ways is much like that of the Roman Empire in the first century, especially its border territories. Throughout the Roman world, a certain peace, the *Pax Romana*, was ruthlessly maintained. However, there was an ever-present threat of a breakdown in the imposed order; a constant risk that “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.” (Matthew 24:7)

It was in this such world that the mystery of our redemption was achieved by the Lifegiving Death and Resurrection of our Lord, God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

One of the particular similarities between our world and the Greco-Roman society of our Lord’s time is undoubtedly the widespread cynicism that had contaminated the thinking of the reed-pen “influencers” of his day. By the first century, the Roman establishment, the elites, had given up believing in anything! Perhaps Pilate’s question “What is truth?” was more a cry of intellectual desperation than the smug pretence of one who, for the time being, had the upper hand.

The tragedy of Pilate’s question is that the answer was standing in front of him. Jesus had already told the apostles “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” (John 14:6) And what of our not dissimilar world? For many of our contemporaries, and sometimes the most significant, the search for truth has been abandoned to be replaced by the assurance that there are “many truths” – yours, theirs and mine!

Compare that with the forthright observation of St John Chrysostom, “Nothing can be clearer or mightier than the truth, just as nothing is weaker than falsehood even when it is covered by ten thousand veils; however, falsehood is easily detected and quickly melts away.” (Homily on St John’s Gospel)

This year the Catholic Church is celebrating a Jubilee Year, a special year of intense prayer, a time of grace, spiritual renewal and pilgrimage. It has been designated as a Year of Hope; and in the foundational documents announcing the Jubilee, the People of God are described as a Pilgrim People.

As we celebrate Holy Easter, it is good that we remember the connection between the fundamental virtues - faith, hope, love – and truth. We believe in what is true, we can only hope in what is true, and we are moved to love what is true.

This year is also the seventeen hundredth anniversary of the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea held in AD 325. This assembly of at least two hundred and fifty bishops summoned by Emperor St Constantine the Great, drafted the fundamental statement of faith that was to develop as the Nicæan Creed. As Catholics and Orthodox Christians, we accept and still recite the Nicæan Creed. We should be ever grateful that we are Nicæan Christians who have been called into the Ark of Salvation, which is the Church.

We are also blessed this year to celebrate Holy Easter with our Orthodox brothers and sisters. The last occasion was 2017, the next will be 2028. Let us resolve that we will pray for, and work towards, a common date for the Paschal celebration.

If we were to consider a descriptor for contemporary society, many would suggest “uncertain”. This uncertainty impinges upon almost every aspect of our lives – from the cost of household grocery shopping to international geo-politics. We are living in an era of misinformation and manufactured news; unfortunate realities which simply add to the uncertainty and confusion which lurk ever in the background.

In this Great Southern Land we enjoy a degree of religious freedom denied to much of the world’s population. We must never forget the hardships endured by our forebears in the Faith, those who when necessary, stood even as Saint Athanasius did, *contra mundum* - against the world; and now we must be ever watchful lest those hostile to the Faith slowly but surely erode our hard-won liberties.

And keep in mind that even here in Australia and New Zealand there are those who do not wish us well; “those who call evil good, and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.” (Isaiah 5:20)

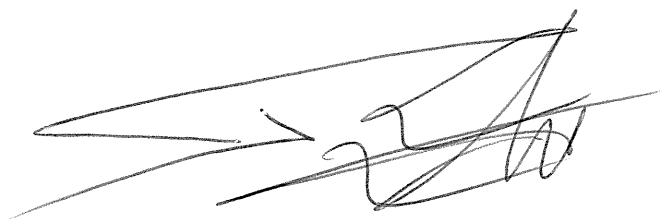
Perhaps we are so familiar with the Easter greeting that we forget it is a statement claiming to be a truth, “Christ is Risen! He is truly Risen.” At the Resurrection service on Great and Holy Saturday night, we challenge the darkness; and the challenge we throw into that surrounding darkness is “Christ is Risen!” If we listen carefully with our faith-filled hearts, we will hear the entire Cosmos, everything that is, or has ever been, or ever will be, cry out in return: “He is truly Risen!”

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

May this Blessed Easter, Holy and Glorious Pascha, be for each of you and those dear to you, a time of every Heavenly Grace and Good Gift.

Christ is Risen! قام المسيح ! Χριστός ἀνέστη!

With my paternal blessing and with prayers assured,



✠ Robert Rabbat, DD

From our Eparchy at Greenacre, New South Wales
Holy and Glorious Pascha, 2025.

