

The divinely bright victory of our Lord Jesus Christ over all enemies of our salvation and our gift of eternal life is hymned in the services for the feast of Pascha. All the divine services and church actions for this feast are especially solemn and are penetrated by the single feeling of joy for the Resurrected One, so that the Church of Christ at this time is sooner represented by the celebration from the heavens rather than by the still militant church on earth 1). The majestic and multi-significant Paschal Divine Services reveal to the believer everything that in Christianity is mysterious, high and redemptive for the soul, light, pleasing and comforting for the heart. And if when the Christian heart is tuned up so much higher, it becomes alien to various sorts of earthly and vile interests, and furthermore it becomes alien to all sinful crimes. If when it becomes more fully tuned to sacred spiritual content, as it does in the moment of the majestic Paschal Divine Services, when the Christian ecstasy completely grasps the soul of a man and dominates in it over all its other thoughts, feelings and aspirations 2). The power of the grace of God in the paschal Divine Services fills the Christian soul with an inexplicable tenderness, quiet happiness, and high blessedness of ardent love for God the Savior and for the people, the brethren in Christ.

Notes:

1) "Today the Angels" says St. John Chrysostom, "exult, the Archangels rejoice, the Cherubim and the Seraphim celebrate the present feast with us. But their general gladness is with us although we receive grace from the Master, for if there is joy in Heaven for one sinner who repents (Luke 15:7), then for them there is greater universal salvation". "Then offer, beloved ones, the greatness of this joy, when even the higher powers celebrate together with us". "Their and our Master Himself is not ashamed to celebrate together with us. And what do I say: He is not ashamed? He wishes to celebrate together with us. From where do we know this? Listen, as He said: "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you" (Luke 22:15). If He wanted "to eat the Passover", it is evident that He wanted to celebrate the resurrection with us. Therefore, when you see that not only the Angels and the assembly of all heavenly powers but also the Master Himself of the Angels celebrate together with us, does that not reach you for joy, and what still remains an occasion for grieving? So let no one today sorrow because of his poverty; for this is the spiritual feast; let no one who is rich exalt himself by his wealth; for in no way may wealth increase the joy of this feast. Here there is one meal for the rich and for the poor. Whoever is rich is not able to add anything to this meal. Whoever is poor because of his poverty is not able at all to participate less in the offering, for this is Divine grace. Here all have one robe: "For as many of you", it is said, "as were baptized in Christ, have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27). Here nothing is offered but the hearing of the Divine pronouncements, the prayers of the fathers, the blessings of the priests, unity in thought, peace and agreement, spiritual gifts,

spiritual awards". "Today the people have joined the Angels, and, clothed in a body, together with the bodiless powers offer up hymns". "Today in all the universe there is joy and spiritual gladness!"

And what other joy on earth, as His Eminence Demetrius, Archbishop of Cherson teaches, can be higher and more perfect than the joy of the light-bearing resurrection of Christ? The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ dispersed all the darkness of error in which the entire human race perished, and illumined us by the light of truth. It assured us that Jesus Christ is the only-begotten Son of God, everlasting Truth, that all His divine promises are "yea and amen", that sooner Heaven and earth will come to an end rather than One of His words not be fulfilled. It serves as a faithful pledge and guarantee that the sacrifice offered for our sins by the Son of God is accepted by the Heavenly Father in an odor of sweet fragrance, that the obtaining of the remission of our sins is doubtless, that "today the condemnation of those who are in Christ Jesus is not only to those who go according to the flesh, but according to the spirit", that "if we confess our sins, it is true and righteous for us to abandon our sins". It completely testifies to us that we are truly the children of God; that the Heavenly Father, Which is "the Son Himself not given any mercy, but is He Who was betrayed for all of us", sees our every need, hears our every petition and is ready to grant us everything for the sake of His Beloved Only-begotten Son; that all of Heaven admits their living participation in the destiny of our very origins; that holy angels and hosts chosen of God rejoice together in our joy, suffer together in our troubles, are ready with their beneficial help for us in any need and stand around us; that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, with all His divine omnipotence, with all His inexhaustible gifts of grace, abides with us according to His immutable promise: "I am with you until the end of the ages". Can the subject of joy on earth be higher, more perfect than this? But the main inexhaustible source of joy for the Christian is that the light of the resurrection of Christ illumines the future eternal life and his destiny beyond the grave. Now we visibly and sensibly make sure that God will not permit "his venerable ones to see corruption, and will not put his soul in Hades"; that, "if we believe, that Jesus died and rose, that God also died in Jesus bringing Him up with Him"; "that all die in Adam, so that all may live in Christ"; "that for this Christ both died and rose and gives life, so that he may possess even the dead and the living". Now, standing before the tomb of the Lord, we are assured that the order of all things seen by us only lead to the grave, and beyond the grave a new order of things begins, where the pretended celebration passes into eternal shame and torment, and the temporal humiliation into eternal glory. Now, looking at the image of the resurrection of Christ, we see in it the beginning of that highest celebration, when "the kingdom of God and the era of His Christ will begin and open completely, when all our enemies, all the evil, unfriendly, hostile ones will be

driven away and abolished, when "the righteous will be illumined like the sun in the Kingdom of their Father" when "the Lord will take away every tear from their eyes, and all earthly grief will not be remembered by them and eternal joy will be over their heads". There, the glance of the true believer in Christ, resurrected from the dead, is unceasingly turned to this glorious, bright, eternally blessed and eternally joyful celebration. There is his true fatherland, there are all the treasures of his heart, there is all his life "hidden with Christ in God", there his heart lives and is glad not only during the time of the feast of light, but also during all the days of his life on earth. The wonder working power of the joy of the resurrected Lord consists in that it abundantly fills and enables one to forget and not to feel any of the earthly grief and woes at all. Similar to ordinary life the great joy is to be able to forget, to not at all feel the small afflictions and vexations. For as if there was no humble and abused righteous man on earth, He rose like the sun to the kingdom of His Father; as if there was no follower of Christ exposed to deprivations and troubles, He receives a hundredfold and eternal life follows. The internal source of this unimpoverished joy about the Lord is the Spirit Comforter, Who from His Father submits the Lord to all who believe in Him, who love Him and who observe His commandments. Therefore, wherever there was in His name a faithful follower of Christ, with him and in him everywhere and always this beneficial source of sacred joy everywhere and always inspires goodness and gladness about the Lord. "Sincerely love the resurrected Lord, with all your heart", His Holy Gospel posits not only the main sources of all your desires and hopes, but also the unique direction of the pattern of your thoughts and feelings by all the rules of your life and deeds: then the Lord Jesus Christ Himself will love you and "will come to you and will create a place for you"; then your heart will be filled with such peace and satisfaction, with such joy and blessedness, such as were not felt by any happy person in the world; then the day of the Resurrection of the Lord will be a true Pascha for you, a "deliverance from troubles, with the beginning of eternal life". It is intrinsically understood that the true sacred joy of the Lord, as a fruit of the Holy Spirit, is a spiritual not a physical joy, and it is not found in the carnal deeds of darkness, but in the deeds of light and spiritual understanding, not in the pleasures of flesh and feelings, but in the delight of a pure conscience. This sacred joy is carried out in the deeds of love and mercy to neighbors, which brings to the heart an ineffable consolation and blessedness, when the beneficial joy is born again in thousands of joyful hearts by the doers of good deeds. (See the details in the Full Collection of Sermons by Demetrius, Archbishop of Cherson, Vol. II, pp. 139-145) (Sm. podr. Poln. Sobr. Propov. Dimitriia, Archiiep. Chersonskago, t. II, 139-145).

2) There are people, with a rough heart and cold feelings and gloominess built into the soul, the majority of whom do not believe in God and in all things divine, but also who often in general are moved and softened on the day of Christ

by the celebration of the entire Christian world which pours out light and peace in the soul, and grants them the feeling of the sweetness of the simplicity of faith and dialogue of the heart with God. And however many of them, honed by the flow of this general Christian inspiration on Holy Pascha and having deeply reflected on their spiritual separateness from other believers in the world and having understood and assessed the bitter fruits of their unbelief, have condemned and left it forever. And what can one say about those who are accustomed to meet the Holy Pascha in the simplicity of a sincere, fervent faith, with a feeling of their dialogue with God and with the Holy Church, with religious inspiration, instead of with coldness and indifference? For them the day of Christ is a special day, on which all bitterness and grief are forgotten, on which they are renewed in the soul by an enthusiastic religious joy (Novgorod Diocesan News (Novg. Ie. V.) 1897, 8).

*S. V. Bulgakov, **Handbook for Church Servers**, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1274 pp. (Kharkov, 1900) pp. 0566-7  
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