

Ten Thoughts for Pascha
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Upbeat
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1. *Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life.* The words of the Easter Troparion constantly resound the theme that Christ's Resurrection has put an end to death, through *His* death. Man has been set free from sin, the *ultimate* death, the *spiritual* death, the complete alienation from God.
2. By the Resurrection, man has been given the opportunity to pass *from death unto life, from earth to heaven.* All living beings are renewed, are freed from sin, or death, and pass into life, the life Christ has given us – the life of love, of grace, of sanctity. Earth becomes a heaven, a kingdom, the very kingdom of God. This is the Passover of the New Testament, the *passing over* from alienation from God – *sin* – to a new life, and the Resurrection of Christ has made it all possible.
3. In the Old Testament, we find that our Passover, the Resurrection of Christ, is prefigured. The Jews, the *Chosen People*, were being held captive in Egypt, and God, displeased with the Egyptian Pharaoh for this, sent an angel to destroy the first-born male in every Egyptian family, while *passing over* the houses of His Chosen People. Each Hebrew family, by God's command, in turn sacrificed a lamb and sprinkled its blood on the door frame. The family, in gratitude to God for directing His angel to pass over their houses, then roasted the lamb and ate it with unleavened bread. Similarly, for Christians, the *New Israel*, the *Chosen People*, death and sin, *pass over* us because of the Resurrection. Christ, whom the Evangelist John calls the *Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world*, is *our* Passover Lamb, whom we partake of in the Eucharist. Hence, we derive the term *Pascha*, or *Passover*.
4. When the Israelites crossed over the Red Sea, they experienced a Passover. Having been held captive in Egypt, they fled to the Promised Land and left behind their chains of bondage, and entering into a new state, one of freedom. Likewise, through the Resurrection we flee from the state of bondage by which sin binds us – *the curse of Adam* – and return again to the promised land, where we are reunited with God in a new life, where we once again become children of God, and where we once again become free, free from the bondage of sin.
5. Pascha is not something that just *happens to us*. It doesn't just *pop* into our church calendar unannounced. Pascha is the *end* of a journey – the journey of Great Lent – and the *beginning* of new life, made possible by the love of God. It is our destination, the fulfillment, of our Lenten fasting, prayer, sacrificing, and spiritual renewal. Lent was our journey to the Kingdom of God; Pascha is our goal, our destination – the Kingdom of God *realized*, and the life therein, given to us.

6. Pascha is also not just something that *happened*. It is not a thing of the past, a relic of ancient history with no more significance for modern man than the picture writing of primitive peoples. On the contrary, Pascha *still* happens, over and over again, and to us. It is a total *experience*, the experience of a new life which it opens for us, the new life which nearly twenty centuries ago gloriously emerged from the cold, dark tomb, *Christ*. The Resurrection of Christ is our Resurrection. We have died with Him, and we rise *with* Him. *His* victory has become *our* victory.
7. Through the Resurrection, the entire world is transformed, renewed, refreshed. Christ, the *New Adam*, has appeared in the *New Creation*. That which was worth saving from the old creation was saved; that which was not, has been annihilated. That is what makes it possible to proclaim that *death is no more*.
8. Certainly, we cannot help but recognize that death is still here. It hits our families, it hits us personally. Yet, we still exclaim that *Christ trampled down death by death*. He put an end to death. He gave eternal life. Sure, we still experience death, but the Resurrection changed the very nature of death. No longer is it a total and complete end, with no chance of attaining the Kingdom of God. On the contrary, death is our *passing over* to the Kingdom of God, to life eternal. Death is only the end of our physical life, our mortal life on this earth. The Resurrection transforms it into a *beginning*, the beginning of a new life, a constant passage from this world into the Kingdom already revealed in Christ. The day of our death thus becomes, as the early martyrs refer to it, our *birthday*. *Christ is risen and not one dead remains in the grave!*
9. Our entire Christian faith centers around the reality of the Resurrection of the dead and the expectation of our own literal Resurrection. Pascha stands in the center of that faith. New life is ours for the asking. We have the power to accept it, and we therefore must live *in and for it*.
10. Pascha is the ultimate victory. It is *Christ's* victory; it is *our* victory. *It is the day which knows no sunset*, on which the divine light of God's everlasting love and mercy eternally shines. It thus becomes for us the ultimate joy. We shout, proclaim, and resound the words, or rather, the experience, Christ is Risen! Because we have experienced, *Christ is Risen!* Because we have experienced the Resurrection of Christ and the Kingdom of God, we *know* it, we *enjoy* it, we *love* it. How can we live in accordance with something we do not know, enjoy, and love? Something we have not experienced? We can't. Christ's Resurrection is real. It is not a mere symbol or pious legend, but real in every sense of the word. As the Paschal verses direct, let us therefore *embrace one another, saying 'brothers' even to our enemies, and shout 'Christ is Risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life!'*