Dear CYMKivtsi, parents – advisors, and friends of CYMK,

By the Will and Grace of God – we are at the very conclusion of our Holy Week, about to “enter into the joy” of Our Lord’s Resurrection from the dead. For all of us, in numerous ways, this has been a journey through the Great Fast unlike any that we have ever experienced or even heard of anyone else experiencing.

Our church services have been a matter of attending via our electronic devices / computers, and our “gathering” has been “virtual.” For many of you who are students, it has meant a significant shift from physically attending school or classes to an “on-line” learning environment, without the presence of other people, including teachers quite so readily available.

It is also likely that these changes in routines have shaken us … in some cases, a bit … and in other cases … probably a lot. I have thought about you, CYMKivtsi, students – young adults … about how this Covid-19 pandemic environment has affected you, and what this greatest feast of feasts – Pascha – Velykden’ – Easter – the Glorious Resurrection of Our Lord has to “say” to us. So a couple of thoughts …

First, Velykden’ is all about **hope!**And, even more to the point – hope fulfilled! Let us remember the following part of the events of that first Pascha. A small group of followers of Jesus had just witnessed his death on the cross, and His temporary burial. Very early in the morning of the third day … the Myrhh-bearing women came to this spot, full of grief, and fear. They were met by an angel who asked them why are they looking for the living among the dead? It was then, “after the fact,” that the followers of Jesus recalled that He had said would rise from the dead on the third day! Yes, dear CYMKivtsi, never, ever, ever … give up hope. Our God will never let us down!

Second, Velykden’ is about affirming our **“place”** as people ***in*** the world but ***not of*** the world. We have been called and chosen to be lights to the world, shining that beacon of light and hope to the world. There is a health pandemic affecting our planet at this time. It has affected and will continue to affect much of what and how we do things, and live our lives. However, while we need to respect and follow the advice – counsel and directives of our governmental health authorities, we are called to live with **faith** in the face of fear. By embracing Pascha – Velykden’ as much as we can, and holding fast to our customs and practices as much as possible, and obviously, changing our way of greeting one another (including via email or any of our social media platforms,) starting tomorrow, from a “Hi, how are you?” to a joyous “Khrystos Voskres! – Christ is Risen!” … we both affirm this life-changing event for ourselves, and demonstrate our faith, including in the face of fear, over the current pandemic situation and environment.

And third, Velykden’ is about **love!** It is out of the love of God for everyone of us that the Father sent His Son into the world, and our lives, so that all of us can come to believe in Him, and literally, have a “way out” and a way forward. It may certainly feel at times that we have difficulty perceiving or experiencing God’s love for us – especially if and when we are concerned or even worried about school, exams, our ability financial and otherwise to continue with our studies, or even can we find work for the summer, or even will there be a job for me when I do finish school. Dear CYMKivtsi – God’s love for us is way more powerful than anything we can come up with as a “cause” for worry. We sing in the Paschal (Easter) tropar – “… by His death, he has ***trampled***death …” (walked all over it – stamped on it – destroyed it) because of His love for us!

So, be of good cheer, dear CYMKivtsi! I wish and pray for all of you, **health** of body, soul, and mind. I wish and pray for you and for your families a very blessed Pascha. Join in church services being live-streamed, pray fervently along with the priest and dyak-singer(s). Stay safe … stay apart … but connected to and with one another, with your “church” and “CYMK” families, and especially with our God who loves us!

**Khrystos Voskres! Christ is Risen!**

**Voistynu Voskres! Indeed He is Risen!**

(otets) Taras