

**PASTORAL LETTER
FROM THE UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF CANADA
ON THE OCCASION OF THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD 2020-2021**

To the Reverend Clergy, Monastics, Seminarians and Laity of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in Canada:

Christ is Born! Let Us Glorify Him!

Dearly Beloved in Christ!

“Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.” Lk 1:28

With what mixed emotions did the Mother of God experience the Annunciation when the Archangel Gabriel greeted Her? On one hand, She experienced fear and confusion about what was taking place in Her life: physically – bearing Jesus in her womb while not yet married; and spiritually - being filled with the Holy Spirit and overwhelmed with peace and joy! Nine months later, at the birth of Her Son Jesus, She continued to treasure and ponder all these words in Her heart. And now, as we celebrate the birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ we might ask ourselves what we are pondering in our hearts? For the past nine months, how have we been pondering the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives and the presence of Jesus, indeed, the Trinity dwelling in us?

Understandably, it was painful for Mary, when some ridiculed Her as a maiden with child. Meanwhile, others rejoiced with Her, such as her cousin Elizabeth. How important it must have been for Mary to have faith in God’s presence so that she was able to face all storms in life with a deep conviction of His love. Similarly, be mindful of how important it is for all of us today to be certain of God’s presence for He walks with us through the tragedies in life and is ever ready to celebrate times of joy with us. Either way, He accompanies us doing the will of the Father.

We must pray for the same assurance the Mother of God had at that time. Let us draw strength from Her example of faith and trust in God. She gave birth to Jesus and raised Him, sharing His Sacred Heart with others through Her Heart. We strive to do the same, and pray for those in our families who long for a deep confidence in knowing they are loved and not alone during these difficult times. The challenges we face as individuals, as families and communities are numerous, and we need to be reminded that God is with us in our challenges. Jesus is the true vine, and “every branch that bears fruit, he prunes to make it bear more fruit” (Jn15:2 NRSV).

Therefore, while growing weary of COVID and all the adjustments to life we are making, let us remain connected to our parish family. Let us celebrate our faith by knowing the presence of God in Holy Scripture. You are part of the vine. Remain in God through the Eucharist either physically or through spiritual communion. Prepare to celebrate Reconciliation sacramentally as we forgive one another on a daily basis. Then, renewed in Christ, let us follow Him as Missionary Disciples to minister to those who feel isolated and alone: in Canada, Ukraine or wherever our loved ones struggle. Celebrate the birth of Christ by being Christ for others! God has given us the grace to make sure others don’t feel alone despite physical distancing and much more difficult circumstances. Jesus fulfills Scripture through us when we realize more deeply that He dwells within us, helping others believe, sing and proclaim, “*God is With Us, Understand This All You Nations! And Be Humbled, For God Is With Us!*”

May our celebration of this profound truth this Christmas be a time to encounter Jesus Christ in our spouse, in our family members and in our parish because we are an essential part of this profound truth. May we be aware of the presence of Jesus, Mary and Joseph that give us the gift of the Holy Family which is present in our personal and parish families. And may this awareness bear fruit in our lives throughout the new year, 2021, and beyond.

God is with us! Christ is Born!
Sincerely in Christ,

+Lawrence Huculak, OSBM Metropolitan Archbishop of Winnipeg
+Michael Wiwchar, CSsR Eparch Emeritus of Saskatoon
+Severian Yakymyshyn, OSBM Eparch Emeritus of New Westminster
+Stephen Chmilar, Eparch Emeritus of Toronto and Eastern Canada
+David Motiuk, Eparchial Bishop of Edmonton, Administrator of the Eparchy of New Westminster
+Bryan Bayda, CSsR, Eparchial Bishop of Saskatoon, Administrator of the Eparchy of Toronto & Eastern Canada