



Nativity Epistle of the Permanent Conference of Ukrainian Orthodox Bishops Beyond the Borders of Ukraine

To the God-beloved Pastors, Venerable Monastics,
and all Faithful Children of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the Diaspora and in Ukraine

*“Today Christ is born from a Virgin in Bethlehem, today the Eternal One is born and the Word
is incarnated: the powers of heaven rejoice, the earth and all mankind rejoice” (Festal
Stykhyra)*

Christ is Born!

Today the Orthodox Church again celebrates the Nativity of Christ, commemorating the advent into the world of the Son of God. The entire Christian world glorifies and magnifies the New-born God-child, Christ the Lord.

St. Paul calls the Nativity of Christ “A mystery of great piety: God appeared in the flesh. (I Tim. 3:16). The mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God is the greatest and deepest mystery of the Christian faith. The Pre-eternal God becomes man without ceasing to be God. The Holy Evangelist John the Theologian says “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (Jn. 1:14).

In our contemporary anxious and confused world, where terror and uncertainty reign, the quiet and joyful angelic hymn rings out: “Glory to God in the highest, His peace is on earth, and His good-will among men” (Lk. 2:14).

Today the entire world is anxious, just as the residents of Jerusalem were aforetime (Mt. 2:3), and so the angelic song about peace on earth and good-will among men fills every Christian soul with peace and hope for a better future. For today the Saviour of the world lies in a manger, He who “does not break the bent reed and does not snuff out the smoldering flax” (Is. 42:3). “He is our peace, Who tore down the dividing wall” (Eph. 2:14) between heaven and earth, which had been erected by human unrighteousness.

Mankind has contemplated this Divine Infant for over two thousand years, and from Him many derive life-giving strength which transforms their life for the better. The Holy Fathers say that Christ came to the earth in order to raise us up to heaven, that he became man, that we might become sons of God, that He became poor that we might be rich, and humble so that we might be glorified.

It is a great sorrow to us all, that this year during the celebration of the Nativity holidays we experience a great trial as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. Today our temples are affected by particular restrictions which prevent our faithful from receiving necessary pastoral care. But the great feast which we celebrate, the Nativity of Christ, reminds us of God’s immeasurable love for the human person. “God so loved the World, that He gave His Only-begotten Son, that all who believe in Him should not perish, but have eternal life” (Jn. 3:16).

Out of His great love for His creation, He made this world beautiful. But people often break their unity with God through their sinful life and bring misfortune, sickness, and evil into the world. This pandemic, which has shaken the entire world, calls us as Christians to meditate upon our own personal lives. God would not have permitted this pandemic to attain such world-wide development if it were not a reminder to all the people of the earth.

It is precisely the feast of the Nativity of Christ which witnesses to the fact that God does not leave us without His care. God not only looks after the world as a whole, but after each person individually.

And so may the One born in Bethlehem, the Lord resting in the manger, spur each of us on to consider why we live and what path we are following - the straight path of God, or the

crooked path of sin. Faith in God calls all of us to battle with all manner of evil and before anything else with our own personal sin.

During these holy days of the Nativity season let us prayerfully call upon the God-child Christ - our Saviour - so that He might protect all of us from this terrible sickness.

We greet all of you with a sincere heart, dear brothers and sisters, with the great and salvific feasts of the Nativity of Christ, the New Year, and the Holy Theophany. We especially greet our youth and children, and all of you God-beloved Christians in the diaspora and in Ukraine.

May the coming new year be for all of us a year of spiritual growth, peace, good health, familial good fortune, and a God-blessed year of good fortune for all people throughout the world.

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

With Archpastoral Blessings,

+YURIJ, *Metropolitan of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada*

+ANTONY, *Metropolitan of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA and in the Diaspora*

+JEREMIAH, *Archbishop of the Ukrainian Orthodox Eparchy of Brazil and South America*

+DANIEL, *Archbishop of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the USA and Western Europe*

+ILARION, *Bishop of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada*

+ANDRIY, *Bishop of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada*