

**PASTORAL LETTER
FROM THE UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF CANADA
ON THE OCCASION OF THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD 2021-2022**

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!

“The earth offers a cave to the Inaccessible.” Kondak of the Nativity

The *Kondak* of December 25 heralds a true paradox. It reminds us of the sharp contrasts we find in the human condition. Regarding the Incarnation of Jesus, the Indescribable, Eternal and Inaccessible God, is humbly born in a cave. This is truly a low place on earth, perhaps barely fit for animals at times and yet it is where Jesus was born. Today, we find it hard to believe that any person could be born outside of a hospital or a home. Of course, there are survival accounts of people enduring unimaginable challenges, but who could allow such intentional inhospitable human indignity?

Well, we don't have to look far to find human indignity today. Human tragedy is all around us. Physical, medical, emotional and spiritual injustice is the content of many news stories. And in the midst of these stories often there is a ray of light in the darkness, a person who shines and restores our hope in human dignity. Globally, in Ukraine, or in our own homes, the Holy Spirit is waiting to break through to others with good news and each of us would do well to ask God that question, “Lord, how do you want to use me in sharing this news?”

The good news is that despite our hearts being similar in some ways to the inhospitable cave, Jesus wants to dwell there. Our reflection on this profound mystery takes quiet time for prayer, away from the numerous demands requesting our attention as well as celebration of the Sacraments, particularly Eucharist and Reconciliation. In the stillness of our hearts, God will speak, God will give each of us grace and we have an opportunity to say “yes” like members of the Holy Family. Our hearts are manglers of humility, human dignity and love. Every thought and action that honours God or another human being is born there. Jesus is born in the manger of our hearts. This is good news. Likewise prayer together as families and parishes uplifts and confirms that “God is with us!”

Therefore, let us intercede in prayer and perhaps take positive steps toward solutions to the many inhumane things we encounter in life. Let us learn from St. Joseph who, in his obedience to God through several dreams, became the person to ignite in Jesus a sense of obedience to the Father. Let us learn from Mary, the Mother of God, who trusted in God's plan for salvation as she gave birth to Christ and played a significant role in forming the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Let us allow the Christ in us to be a light to those in our families and parishes. This is so important in an atmosphere that finds many people and numerous opinions at odds about how to deal with the COVID epidemic.

May our celebration of this profound truth this Christmas, that God is born in us, 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, 2022, 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

+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