

Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy of Winnipeg Українська Католицька Архієпархія в Вінніпегу

2023 PASTORAL GREETINGS OF THE UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF CANADA ON THE OCCASION OF THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

To the Very Reverend Clergy, Monastics and Religious Sisters and Brothers,
Seminarians and Laity of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in Canada

Christ is Born! Let us Glorify Him!

“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth
peace among those whom he favors!” (Luke 2:14)

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

As we celebrate the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord, we do so with a sense of wonder in our hearts. The story of the birth of Jesus serves as a constant reminder of God’s love for us.

To express God’s boundless love for us, God appears among us in the person of his own son, Jesus Christ. God with us. Emmanuel. And in this we rejoice!

This year, we celebrate Christmas in the midst of much unrest in the world, in Ukraine, the Middle East and the Holy Land – the very birthplace of Our Saviour, Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Libya, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria, and elsewhere.

Peace. We long for peace.

Jesus, at his birth, comes into the world as the Prince of Peace, in fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah: “For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9: 6).

Jesus is the Prince of Peace. He comes into the world as the great peacemaker among humanity. He teaches in the Beatitudes, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (Matthew 5: 9). At his death, he tells his disciples, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you” (John 14: 27).

On that very first Easter, we are told: “When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you.’” (John 20: 19).

Alongside other powerful names such as Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, and Eternal Father, Jesus is given the title Prince of Peace, indicating one of His many roles — the One who is the leader of peace and offers it to others.

As we celebrate Jesus’ birth this Christmas, let us thank God for the gift of peace. And let us honour the Prince of Peace by continuing to be peacemakers in the world, starting within our own families and among our friends and neighbours.

The story is told about an old rabbi who once asked his students how one could recognize the time when night ends and day begins. One student asked, “Is it when, from a great distance, you can tell a dog from a sheep?” “No,” said the rabbi. Another student asked, “Is it when, from

a great distance, you can tell a date palm from a fig tree?” “No,” said the rabbi. “Then,” the students asked, “When is it?” The rabbi answered, “It is when you look into the face of any human creature and see your brother or sister there. Until then, night is still with us.

Ah, to see brother or sister in all! This is the call of all humanity!

Yet, we live in a world that is all too often filled with horrific examples of communities torn apart: hunger and starvation, ethnic cleansing, segregation, genocide, drug wars, tougher immigration, and so on.

Still, there is plenty of food and work for everyone in the world if we but share our common wealth and recognize that we are all brothers and sisters. We are not alone but are related with others all around the world. We belong to the family of God, and it is the love of God that binds us together.

This Christmas, we remember those that fight for peace in the world. We remember the joy that peace brings, and we pray for peace and a for better world, especially in those places where there is conflict today. We pray for a day when we can truly call each other brother and sister.

As we celebrate the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord, may Christ, truly bless you and your family with peace, love and joy, now and in the New Year!

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

Given on December 6, 2023

On the Feast of St. Nicholas, the Wonderworker, Archbishop of Myra in Lycia

+ Lawrence Huculak, OSBM
Metropolitan Archbishop of Winnipeg

+ David Motiuk (author)
Eparchial Bishop of Edmonton

+ Bryan Bayda, C.S.s.R.
Eparchial Bishop of Toronto

+ Michael Kwiatkowski
Eparchial Bishop of New Westminster

+ Michael Smolinski, C.S.s.R.
Bishop-Elect of Saskatoon

+ Andriy Rabi
Auxiliary Bishop of Winnipeg

+ Michael Wiwchar, C.S.s.R.
Bishop Emeritus of Saskatoon

+ Stephen Chmilar
Bishop Emeritus of Toronto