

LET US MEET IN CHURCH THIS WEEK
LET US SPEND TIME THERE WITH OUR LORD

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ!

Glory to Jesus Christ!

We are on the threshold of dramatic events in the course of our Ukrainian liturgical year. Perhaps by time you read this, we will have already contemplated the amazing raising of Lazarus from the tomb (John 11:1-45). This foreshadowing of the very Resurrection of Christ and the resurrection that our Lord promises to each of us (John 5:28-29). Then the joyful entry of Jesus into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. This marks the short time that is left until we celebrate the joy of Pascha. Even our Ukrainian tradition this Sunday reflects the hopeful excitement that is already welling in our souls, "I do not strike you, but the branch strikes you, one week until Easter!"

My friends we are about to enter into Passion Week with our Lord. A week of dramatic prayer that is rich in theology and grace. It is not so much a time of commemoration of historic, world-changing events, but it is a joining with the Lord and His Church to implore and obtain today that grace and profound change for us and for this mad world in which we are living. I appeal to you as a brother and fellow traveller... Let us all make the best of this week!

Let us make time and make the effort to travel together! In each of our parish churches there is a schedule of the amazing liturgical services and events that our people have practiced for a thousand years now. The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, the opportunity for Sacramental Confession, the Holy Thursday liturgy of the institution of the Holy Eucharist and the Priesthood (an opportunity for us to thank God and to pray for our priests), the Passion Gospels, the Burial of Christ, the watching and praying at the Tomb through the night. Perhaps there are other events, like the Way of the Cross, penitential candlelight walks with the Rosary and the Jesus Prayer, the soul-stirring Jerusalem Matins, etc.

Find out about that schedule and mark all the events on your calendar. Consider including neighbouring parishes to fill-out your plan. Plan to attend everything! Invite your family members and friends and acquaintances to join you. Assure them that they are invited! Regardless of your mood or attitude, come anyway and stand at the back with your arms crossed if you like, simply observing and listening. But come. Your People need you at this time. Your disquieted world needs you. Your Lord, Who loves you, wants you.

There are thousands of "Newcomers" who have come to our Eparchy since Russia's heartless full-scale invasion four years ago. There are thousands of Ukrainians in Canada who have been here for well over a century now. What if we all made the effort

this year to give this week to our Lord as we prepare to celebrate the Resurrection? People in Ukraine are dying every day, as they are in so many other troubled areas of the world. We see an increase of uncertainty and darkness in our world socially, economically and spiritually. Let us... at least us... who have a millennial tradition of Christian faith and culture, come together to be with our Lord throughout Passion Week and to be there at the dawn of His Glorious Resurrection! Trusting, praying and waiting with hope!

I know that our Lord will answer our prayer and grant each of us personal consolation and He will bless Ukraine and our Eparchy with untold grace and new life!

May our Lord grant each of us a profound Passion Week and Easter experience! I hope to see you there.

Sincerely in Christ,

+Michael
Bishop, Eparchy of New Westminster

