

PASTORAL LETTER
FROM THE UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF CANADA
ON THE OCCASION OF THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD
2016/2017

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

Christ is born! Let Us Glorify Him!

*The people walking in darkness have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness
a light has dawned. (Isaiah 9:2)*

At the Complines service on the Eve of the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord, Jesus Christ, we sing out “*Z Namy Boh! God is with us!*” This beautiful hymn evokes in us faith, hope and joy in the awareness that the eternal God loves us so much that He sent His Only-Begotten Son to be with us. God became man, in the person of Jesus Christ, who, in all his works and actions, showed us the unending LOVE and MERCY of His Father.

When Pope Francis opened the Year of Mercy, he expressed his hope that all faithful of the Church would be able to rediscover and experience in their lives this unending love and mercy of God. Reflecting on this past year, however, we see that much has happened that troubles our hearts. We have seen the photos of wildfires destroying thousands of homes in Fort McMurray. We weep for Ukraine, where fighting continues, with staggering loss of life. We sympathize with the millions of refugees who have fled Syria, fearing for their lives. We shudder to think that our own government has recently legalized medically assisted suicide. Perhaps we have personally experienced some tragedy or sadness in our own lives. We may be tempted to ask ourselves: Is God truly with us? If He is, where is His love and mercy?

When God became man – when Jesus Christ was born– it was in a lowly hidden cave in the dark of the night. The light of God-With-Us illuminated that cold dark cave and gave warmth to all those present – Mary and Joseph, the shepherds, and even the animals. And so it is today in our troubled world with all its challenges. God has not abandoned us! The light of God-With-Us continues to shine forth in humble surprising ways. We see God’s mercy in the people who, in many and wonderful ways, gave assistance to the victims of the fires in Fort McMurray and in those who offered refuge or assistance to the refugees from Syria. We see it in the actions of our faithful who send help to the families of fallen soldiers in Ukraine and support the chaplains at the front. We see it in our priests who visit the dying and offer them comfort and hope through the Sacrament of Holy Anointing. We see it in those who *pray* for peace in the world and those who

strive to *bring* peace, forgiveness and love to others. We see it in priests, nuns and catechists who teach the faithful about God and help them grow in faith. We see it in the humble everyday actions of mothers and fathers who work for a living and care for their children. And we see it in all concrete acts of love offered by ordinary people who heed the words of Jesus Christ: “*When I was hungry, you gave me to eat. When I was thirsty, you gave me to drink. When I was naked, you clothed me. When I was sick or in prison, you visited me.*”

Then let our hearts not be troubled! This Christmas, let us sing out *God is with us!* more fervently than ever! And then let us continue to make it true by allowing the light of Christ to shine through us, in all our words and deeds, so that the Love and Mercy of God may transform our world and bring forth hope, peace and joy.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, please accept our greetings and best wishes on this feast of Nativity of Our Saviour, Jesus Christ! May every day of the coming year be filled with His light and peace. Just as a newborn baby brings much joy and love to a family, may the birth of Emmanuel *God-with-us* bring joy and love into your family and your lives.

+Lawrence Huculak, OSBM
Metropolitan Archbishop of Winnipeg

+David Motiuk,
Eparchial Bishop of Edmonton

+Stephen Chmilar,
Eparchial Bishop of Toronto

+Ken Nowakowski,
Eparchial Bishop of New Westminster

+Bryan Bayda, CSsR
Eparchial Bishop of Saskatoon

+Michael Wiwchar, CSsR
Eparch Emeritus of Saskatoon

+Severian Yakymyshyn, OSBM
Eparch Emeritus of New Westminster