

**PASTORAL LETTER
OF THE UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF CANADA**

ON THE OCCASION OF THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD 2014

To the Very Reverend Clergy, Monastics and Religious Sisters, Seminarians and Lay Faithful of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in Canada:

Christ is Risen!

Indeed He is Risen!

“But we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel...” [Lk. 24:21]

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ!

The words quoted at the beginning of this letter were spoken by two of Christ’s disciples as they fled Jerusalem. Dismayed upon witnessing the crucifixion, death and burial of Jesus, they did not recognize the Risen Lord when he caught up with them on their journey. They had been told that Jesus had risen from the dead but there seemed to be doubt in their hearts that such news was really true.

In these recent times our hearts and minds have been focused on the turmoil in our ancestral land of Ukraine. Indeed not only we, but many throughout the world have been caught up in the struggles of our brothers and sisters as they fight to defend the freedom of their native land. Their struggle against sin and injustice has been echoed in the readings and themes of the Great Lent services.

And we too, like the disciples of Christ, having witnessed these difficult times, may find it hard to rejoice in the resurrection of the Lord. Rather, we are searching for comfort in our fear and sorrow. Where can the people of Ukraine turn for support and guidance on their journey through these uncertain times? How can they rejoice in the resurrection of the Lord?

As the Risen Lord walked with his disciple on their way to Emmaus, he opened their hearts and minds by explaining to them God’s plan for humanity and the role Jesus carried out in this divine plan. Jesus said to the disciples: ***“Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” [Lk. 24:26]*** In other words the journey to the resurrection to eternal life leads all of us through the valley of human suffering.

As we listened to the news reports from Ukraine, we often heard in the background the prayers and hymns of the faithful. We saw photos of priests holding high the holy cross in the midst of confrontation. We caught glimpses of sacred icons and banners standing firm against weapons and guns. And we witnessed a tent made

into a chapel providing a place of prayer in the midst of turmoil. Indeed God has been with his people!

The final sign by which the disciples recognized Jesus was in the breaking of the bread – the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. At that point the Risen Lord then disappeared from their midst, but by then they had found the needed spiritual hope to renew their lives. They then declared: ***“Were not our hearts burning within us while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us?” [Lk. 24:32]***

Dearly Beloved in Christ!

This year as we gather to celebrate the resurrection of the Lord, let us find in this celebration the gift of hope for our lives and in the lives of those we hold dear. Let us hold aloft our faith in the Risen Lord as our sign of victory over the turmoil and despair that a world void of God’s love can only provide. Let us chant, “Christ is Risen” as a call of strength and support to all, especially our brothers and sisters in Ukraine, and a reminder that the Risen Lord is always with us.

We greet you all with this sacred proclamation: Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen!

- + **Lawrence Huculak, OSBM, Metropolitan Archbishop of Winnipeg**
- + **Michael Wiwchar, CSsR, Bishop Emeritus of Saskatoon**
- + **Severian Yakymyshyn, OSBM, Bishop Emeritus of New Westminster**
- + **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**