

**PASTORAL LETTER OF
THE UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF CANADA
ON THE OCCASION OF THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD – 2012**

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

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

When as a Christian family, we celebrate the birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we greet one another with words of joy: "Christ is Born! Glorify Him!". This is our expression of faith and of our commitment to give glory and honor to the One who came into this world to save us, to restore humankind's relationship with its Creator.

In the Sacred Scriptures we read of the wondrous birth of our Lord. The Gospel of Luke recounts how Mary and Joseph went from door to door in Bethlehem and were turned away. They found shelter in a humble cave, used as a stable, and there the King of Kings was born into our world. A lowly manger served as His cradle. The first to witness the event of God being born among us were simple shepherds, living and working far from the circles of power and influence. Yet, it was to them that the Angel said: "Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." Do not be afraid; for see – I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord," (Lk. 2:10-11).

What was the response to this wonderful news that they had heard? Did they shut their minds to what was seemingly the impossible? Did they make light of it – or dismiss their vision as an illusion? No, they opened the doors of their hearts, and thus were able to accept that, which can only be discerned by those, who believe. "When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made know to us.'" (Lk. 2:15). These men found their way to the Infant, and through the eyes of faith were able to recognize the Saviour, the Messiah, as the Angel had told them. Without faith, they would have simply seen a new-born baby and his parents in a stable surrounded by barnyard animals, nothing new or wondrous, just another poor child born into the world!

Just as the shepherds more than two thousand years ago, so too each Christian

generation is called to recognize the signs of salvation in their midst. This year here in Canada we were blessed to host the Synod of Ukrainian Catholic Bishops, held in Manitoba in September. Together on hospitable Canadian soil we sought to discern the sign of our times in order to reaffirm our faith in Jesus Christ and our commitment to give Him glory through the life and service of our Church throughout the world.

We live in a particular moment in history, a time that presents great challenges to the faith, but also great opportunities. Gathered in Synod on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the arrival to Canada of Blessed Nykyta Budka, our first Ukrainian Catholic Bishop, we reflected on both the growth of our Church over the last century, and the need for more vibrant expressions of faith in the circumstances of the 21st century. We are reminded of this as we celebrate “The Year of Faith” proclaimed by His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI. In his pastoral letter to proclaim the year of Faith, *Porta fidei*, “the door of faith”, the Holy Father recalls the famous words of Blessed Pope John Paul II’s inaugural homily: “Open wide the doors to Christ”. When we celebrate our Lord’s Nativity this year, we are called, dear Sisters and Brothers, in a particular way to “open wide the doors to Christ”.

For us the year 2013 has another significance. It is the 1025th anniversary of the Baptism of Rus-Ukraine. As children of the Baptism of Kyivan Rus’, we can once again reflect on the legacy of Saint Volodymyr the Great who led his nation into the baptismal waters of the mighty river Dnipro, accepting in faith the same Good News that the Shepherds of Bethlehem heard proclaimed. This past year while visiting many of our parishes in Canada, His Beatitude our Patriarch, Sviatoslav invited the faithful of Canada to journey to Kyiv in a world-wide pilgrimage to commemorate the Baptism of Kyivan-Rus’ at the newly-constructed Sobor of the Holy Resurrection. Like the Shepherds of old, we are invited to see for ourselves the wonder and join together to celebrate our baptismal spiritual heritage with our Patriarch, our bishops, clergy, religious and lay-faithful from around the world. For those of our faithful who are not able to make this pilgrimage we encourage you to find ways of celebrating this anniversary in your own parish communities. But let us celebrate this anniversary with a spirit of more than looking back into history, let us examine closely our Christian heritage and what we as Eastern Christians and Eastern Catholics believe. Let us go forward into 2013 with our hearts and minds open wide to the living patrimony of faith that has been given to us. |

May our New-Born Savior Jesus Christ bless you as you open your hearts wide to receive Him. Throughout the New Year may you receive God’s many blessings with a spirit of thanks and praise. And as we share the Good News with one another, “Christ is born!, “Glorify Him!”, let the words heard by the Shepherds of Bethlehem be our prayer of praise to God for His many gifts and wonders: “Glory to God in the highest heaven and on earth peace among those whom he favors!” (Lk. 2:13-14)

The Blessing of the Lord be upon you!

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

- +Lawrence Huculak, OSBM, Metropolitan Archbishop of Winnipeg
- +Michael Wiwchar, C.Ss.R., Eparch Emeritus of Saskatoon
- +Severian Yakymyshyn, OSBM, Eparch Emeritus of New Westminster
- +Cornelius Pasichny, OSBM, Eparch Emeritus of Toronto
- +David Motiuk, Eparchial Bishop of Edmonton
- +Stephen Chmilar, Eparchial Bishop of Toronto
- +Ken Nowakowski, Eparchial Bishop of New Westminster
- +Bryan Bayda, C.Ss.R., Eparchial Bishop of Saskatoon