

Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy of Winnipeg Українська Католицька Архієпархія в Вінніпегу

2025 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,
Seminarists and Laity of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in Canada

Christ is Born! Let us Glorify Him!

*She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger,
because there was no room for them in the inn. [Lk. 2:7]*

Dearly Beloved in Christ!

A mother hugs her infant child and sets him down to sleep. The child, filled with anxiety and fear, clings to his mother for comfort. This is not his usual bed; but rather it is a makeshift bundle of blankets on the Kyiv subway floor. The mother sings a soothing lullaby; but the child cannot hear it due to the exploding drones and missiles that fly overhead. The child looks for his father for security and support, but mother says he has been called to serve on the front lines of battle. She does not know when if they will ever see him again. - This is Christmas in war-torn Ukraine!

It is not difficult for us to envision this scenario, be it in Kyiv or any other location in Ukraine. How fortunate we are in Canada that we do not have to fear such turmoil brought on by an unjust war and the "Herods" who promote such human anguish and destruction.

But there are other tragedies that we see on our Canadian streets and parks. This is the growing plight of homeless people. We see the tents and shacks in which they live, in the midst of our affluent communities. For the people of the street Christmas does not mean a warm bed, or a nourishing meal, and a visit with family and friends. Rather, Christmas for so many people is just another day of suffering from cold and hunger, poor health and addictions, loss of work and poverty, isolation and hopelessness.

And so, we come to our annual commemoration of the birth of Jesus our Saviour. And we ask the question: How do we celebrate this event in the midst of so much suffering in the world around us? One of the traditional Ukrainian Carols provides a reflection on where Jesus was born:

Not in an imperial palace; but in the midst of cattle;
in the wilderness, in a manger; this we all must know!

[Ne v tsar'kiy palati; a mezhy bydliaty;
U pustyni, u yaskyni; a treba vsim znaty.]

[Dyvnaya novyna – traditional]

The gospel accounts of the birth of Jesus present a story of turmoil, poverty, lack of housing, isolation and rejection. But as our carols like to proclaim, these same gospel accounts give us joy and hope with the message that the Son of God came to us in our human condition, to offer the fullness of life both on earth and in heaven, that no human individual, political power, or fearsome army could even attempt to provide.

Dearly Beloved in Christ Jesus!

There are so many ways that we can take to heart the Good News of the birth of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and to share the hope and joy that is offered to all humanity in the midst of pain and fear.

Firstly - when the media promotes which gifts we should buy this year for our beloved family and friends – let us offer gifts to those in need, who we do not know. There are many opportunities through organizations that collect and distribute anonymous gifts. We too can be a generous St. Nicholas.

Secondly - in the Ukrainian tradition we enjoy bountiful and tasty Christmas meals. Let us make contributions to food banks and agencies that prepare and distribute food hampers. When food so often for us is decorative and celebratory – for many others food is the bare necessity of life. Take another look at your neighbours in need and offer them some nourishing food. And at the same time avoid food wastage and eating to excess.

Thirdly - let us reflect on the true spiritual significance of the birth of Our Saviour by attending Church services, listening to the Word of God, and receiving the spiritual nourishment of the Holy Eucharist. Then we can go out into the world to proclaim, like the angels, “Glory to God in the Highest!” in the carols that we sing. We proclaim this message of hope when we pray for those in the bomb shelters of Ukraine and on our city streets. We do this when we help those, especially the elderly, who are isolated in their homes, unable to reconnect with their family and friends.

As Bishops and Shepherds of Ukrainian Catholics in Canada, we extend to all the blessings of the feast of the Nativity of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! May His birth in Bethlehem help us to recognize the plight of those in need in our midst, so that we can share with them the Bethlehem message of hope, peace and joy in the Lord!

Christ is Born! Let us Glorify Him!

Yours in Christ, source of joy and hope born in Bethlehem,

+ Lawrence Huculak, OSBM
Metropolitan Archbishop of Winnipeg

+ David Motiuk
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 of Saskatoon

+ Andriy Rabiy
Auxiliary Bishop of Winnipeg

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

Given on December 6, 2025

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