

**Pastoral Greetings of the Ukrainian Catholic Bishops of Canada
On the Occasion of the Feast of The Nativity of Our Lord**

December 16, 2024

To the Very Reverend Clergy, Monastics and Religious Sisters and Brothers,
Seminarians and Laity of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in Canada

Christ is Born! Let us Glorify Him!

"The whole universe is today filled with joy, for Christ is born of a Virgin."
(Matins of Christmas)

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Our celebration of the birth of Christ proclaims joy especially amid difficult times in our world at this present moment: The Christmas carols we sing in Ukrainian and English speak of joy that results from the birth of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, - "Nova Radist' Stala" and "Joy to the World." Joy transforms our experiences and joy gives us life. Our Christmas Gospel reading tells us that the astrologers were overjoyed at seeing the star over Bethlehem; let us open our eyes so that God can lead us on the right path. In our Christmas Matins and then during the Divine Liturgy, we announce after receiving the Holy Eucharist, "The whole universe is today filled with joy, for Christ is born of a Virgin." The joy brought about by Christ's birth changes everything, because God is with us.

This repeated singing and hearing of joy because of Christ's Birth nurtures our hearts and minds to believe and understand that God is in control of all things and that our fears and our worries will not change anything. In the face of war, crises, and instability, the joy we experience at Christmas is an antidote to fear and a reminder that God will provide, that God transforms death into life, that God is the source of all hope.

Joy and hope are intimately connected. Joy means having renewed hope. We need joy and hope in our lives and in our world. Joy is not an exuberant happiness that fades quickly and leaves us feeling empty. Joy is a lasting conviction that God is our Lord and that God has compassion on all people. Joy is the belief that God is our hope.

The Jubilee Year is a time of joy and hope that begins during this Christmas Season of 2024 and lasts until December 28, 2025 in Eparchies and on January 6, 2026 at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Pope Francis has given the theme of "Pilgrims of Hope" to the Ordinary Jubilee of 2025. Let us take the joy of Christmas throughout the entire Jubilee year as we mark and celebrate the jubilee as individuals, families, parishes, and the entire people of God.

Being a pilgrim means packing light for the journey. We must remember to pack joy as pilgrims of hope this year. It does not weigh much, but it is necessary. Whether we are making a pilgrimage to Rome to walk through one of the four holy doors or whether we participate in a local pilgrimage in our Eparchy during the Jubilee, we take joy and hope with us. When we experience God's great forgiveness during the Sacrament of Penance during this Jubilee and always, we receive joy and hope. When we give hope to others through our works of kindness and mercy this year, we share joy with the world.

We, the Ukrainian Catholic Bishops of Canada, pray for each one of you and your family throughout our country. We hold our suffering brothers and sisters in Ukraine in prayer knowing that the celebration of Christ's Birth will bring great joy and hope in the midst of great darkness of war. May our Holy Mother protect and guide all of you.

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.Ss.R.
Eparchial Bishop of Toronto

+ **Michael** Kwiatkowski
Eparchial Bishop of New Westminster

+ **Michael** Smolinski, C.Ss.R.
Bishop of Saskatoon

+ **Andriy** Raby
Auxiliary Bishop of Winnipeg

+ **Michael** Wiwchar, C.Ss.R.
Bishop Emeritus of Saskatoon

+ **Stephen** Chmilar
Bishop Emeritus of Toronto

Given on December 6, 2024

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