

NATIVITY EPISTLE OF THE PERMANENT CONFERENCE OF UKRAINIAN ORTHODOX HIERARCHS BEYOND THE BORDERS OF UKRAINE

2019 - 2020

To the beloved
Clergy and Faithful of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church
beyond the Borders of Ukraine and on her native soil.

Christ is Born!

Today, the Holy Orthodox Church radiantly celebrates the Nativity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the hearts of all of us are filled with great and incomprehensible joy; God in the flesh appeared on earth. All humanity had anticipated this event since the time of Adam and Eve. As the prophets of the Old Testament proclaimed: "Behold the Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and you shall call His name Immanuel" which is translated, "God is with us" (Isaiah 7:14). The Lord sends redemption to His people (Psalm 110:9). The salvation of the human race cannot be achieved by human forces and for this reason it is necessary for God to come into the world.

Mankind, which had been dwelling in gloom and in the realm of sin, darkness and despair, has received good news and is filled with joy because the Savior of the human race is born - God is with us! The Son of God is on earth! He is born of the Virgin Mary as a little Baby! The Son of God becomes the Son of man and through the Incarnation takes on human flesh in the person of the newborn Christ. Divine and human nature are united unconfusedly, inconvertibly, indivisibly, inseparably. The Lord becomes like one of us, in everything like us, except He is without sin. God is humbled in the person of the newborn Christ the Saviour. As the Apostle Paul writes: "He made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of man." (Philippians 2: 7)

Some people are born into riches, others are born in poverty; some people try to live with God and in holiness; other people live in sin and forget about God. Later, death takes away one and all. Since the creation of the world, everything in it is repeated and there is nothing new under the sun. But today we are celebrating the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, the birth which St. John of Damascus spoke about "This is the only new occurrence under the sun. The Son of God is born of the Virgin Mary." This Divine providence for us people and for the sake of our salvation is wonderful and incomprehensible because He is born. He, Who created all things and has no beginning or end, is born. The Son of God also becomes the Son of man. The immortal unites with the mortal, the uncreated with the created, to save men from their sins and to grant them salvation.

And how prepared was mankind to welcome and give gifts to the Newborn Savior? We hear the answer in the words of the Kondak on Christmas Day: "the earth offers a cave to the Unapproachable one." In the city of Bethlehem there was no room for the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ; no hotel had taken in the Virgin Mary and the righteous Joseph for



the night. The Little Jesus is born in a poor manger because He has no place among men. The King of the world is not born in royal palaces, not in rich houses, but in poverty and humility, in a cave where animals are kept. The Lord came into this world not just so we could serve Him, but so He could serve all of us. He was not interested in political power, nor wealth, nor glory; He remained untouched by all the temptations and benefits of this world; He did not come here to possess them. He came to conquer this world with all its corrupt values, to overcome sin and death. And He has conquered these, conquered them with the greatest power that no one, except the fullness of God, will ever have. This power is love. His love for us even overcame death. The Son of God descends to the earth because God so loved us all “that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

In our time, very often there is no place for the Lord in the lives of many people, in families, in society, in nations and states. Creation does not need its Creator; humans build paradise on earth without God, but in the end, without God, human life becomes hell, dominated only by sin, hopelessness, and death. But the Son of God is born to give us hope that we are not alone, we are not abandoned, we are not orphans, but that God is with us! The heart of every faithful believer is filled with great joy because the Savior is born. He came into the world to sacrifice Himself for us. He alone can bring salvation to all humanity and cleanse us from our sins and overcome death.

Today the heavens and the earth rejoice; the angels in heaven declare: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men.” (Luke 2:14). The poor shepherds were the first to honor, to worship the Newborn Savior. We shall also send our hearts and prayers to the cave of Bethlehem, so that the little Christ will also bless us, fill us with His abundant graces and generosity, with peace and joy, and grant us spiritual and bodily powers to live with and for Him.

We sincerely greet the pious Ukrainian people in Ukraine and all those dispersed throughout all the corners of the earth - in the United States, Canada, Western Europe, Australia, New Zealand and South America - with a joyous Nativity Feast, and we prayerfully wish that the New Year, 2020, will be peaceful and blessed by the Lord.

With Archpastoral blessings,

- + **YURIJ** – *Metropolitan Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada*
- + **ANTONY** – *Metropolitan Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA, South America and Diaspora*
- + **JEREMIAH** – *Archbishop Ukrainian Orthodox Eparchy of South America*
- + **DANIEL** – *Archbishop Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA and Diaspora*
- + **ILARION** – *Bishop Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada*
- + **ANDRIY** – *Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada*

