

GREETINGS FROM THE BISHOPS  
OF THE UKRAINIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OF CANADA  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE FEAST OF THE PROTECTION  
OF OUR MOST HOLY LADY THE THEOTOKOS  
AND EVER-VIRGIN MARY (POKROVA)

Reverend Fathers, beloved brothers and sisters in Christ!

Glory to Jesus Christ!

On this feast day, together with the entire Orthodox world, we honour the memory of the appearance of the Mother of God in the Blachernae Church in Constantinople, when the Most Holy Mother of God covered the faithful with Her omophorion, giving them protection and hope. This sign became a symbol of Her constant maternal protection over the entire Christian world.

Since the Christianization of Rus-Ukraine, in the most difficult moments of history, the people have always turned to the maternal Protection of the Virgin Mary. This feast day has become one of the symbols of the Ukrainian struggle for truth and freedom: it is special for the Cossacks, for the fighters of the modern era, and remains a source of hope and strength for Ukrainian soldiers today who believe in Her heavenly protection.

The Feast of the Protection of our Most Holy Lady the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary (Pokrova) holds a special place in the hearts of Ukrainians who found themselves in Canada. The first emigrants left their homeland but did not lose their faith. They found comfort and hope in the image of Pokrova. They believed that, just as in Constantinople and on Ukrainian soil, the Mother of God would cover them with Her maternal protection in their new homeland. It is no coincidence that churches were built in the Canadian prairies and cities in Her honour.

Metropolitan Ilarion (Ohienko) rightly noted that for the Ukrainian Church this is a “great feast day.” It reminds us that the Protection of the Mother of God is not only an echo of the past, but also a reality of the present. Her omophorion is always stretched out over us if our hearts are filled with faith and prayer.

Dear ones in Christ, let us pray that Her example of intercession, love and protection of those in need will unite us in love for Ukraine, which is suffering and struggling, and in support of all those who need our assistance.

We welcome you with the feast! May the Blessed Theotokos cover our families with Her Protection, care for children and young people, strengthen the elderly, and give spiritual joy to all. May every heart be filled with the certainty that under Her heavenly protection, we always have reliable protection.

**With archpastoral blessings,**

+ Ilarion, Metropolitan of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada

+ Andriy, Bishop of Toronto and the Eastern Diocese