

Nativity Epistle

**from the Episcopate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada
in the year of our Lord, 2025-2026**

**To the All-Honourable Clergy, to the Diaconate in Christ, and all faithful
of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada**

*"Today, the Virgin gives birth to the Eternal One,
and the earth brings forth a manger to the Unapproachable One."
(Kontakion of the Nativity of Christ)*

Christ is Born!

At this bright and festive time, with reverence, we once again approach the great mystery: the manifestation of God in human flesh, the mystery of boundless love that descends from heaven to dwell among us. During these days, the Church once again leads us spiritually to Bethlehem, to that sacred night when God entered the world as a Baby to embrace all creation with His love.

Oh, what an incomprehensible miracle and inexpressible love: God becomes man so that man can once again draw near to God. We remember that night in Bethlehem when God became close to us, not as a distant Judge, but as a loving Father who came into the world to share our humanity, our fears, our sufferings and hopes, and to fill us with His love. This truth, simple and yet infinitely profound, fills us with inner peace and gratitude.

This is an event of salvation, in which heaven and earth are united in the boundless celebration of God's glory. The Ukrainian people have always sung about the sacred grandeur of this event in Christmas carols, where the harmony resounds: "Heaven and earth are now rejoicing."

The feast of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ is a time to be together with God and with one another. And so today, the Church once again calls us to unite our voices in common prayer, in united singing of praise to Christ who became incarnate for our salvation. It is in joint worship, in worshipping God, who became flesh in the stable in Bethlehem, that we feel unity not only among ourselves, but also with the whole universe, which now glorifies the Creator. In this unity, our faith becomes alive, and God's grace becomes more tangible to us.

It is this unity that helps us to feel the heavenly celebration, to truly open ourselves to the joy of Bethlehem, a joy to the mystery of the coming of the Saviour, who was born to bring peace and hope to the world. This gentle ray of divine love connects heaven and earth, prompting us to feel God's presence among us and open ourselves to the joy of the Saviour's coming to earth.

However, today's Christmas continues to be filled with the anxieties of war, especially for our brothers and sisters in Christ in Ukraine, as well as for the faithful who have been forced to

leave their homes, but whose heart and thoughts remain in the midst of the trials that come from their native land.

Therefore, let us all pray together to the Saviour born in Bethlehem, imploring for a just peace: that the war may end; that the modern Moscow "Herods" may no longer kill God's children and no longer commit violence against the innocent who are born on Ukrainian soil for the glory of the Creator.

But despite our worries and daily concerns, let us welcome Christ, the joyful Light of Bethlehem, into the depths of our lives. Let Him enlighten our thoughts, words, and deeds, so that this heavenly joy may become a living force in our daily lives, giving us inner peace, spiritual renewal, and the ability to share love with our neighbours.

When we allow this Light to touch our lives, it begins to transform our reality and illuminate the lives of others. This is how a community of love is born. This is how Christmas becomes not only an event of the past, but a source of spiritual transformation of the world.

Dearly beloved in Christ!

Let us remember that we are called to bring the light of Christ's presence into the world like a lamp lit from the Light of Bethlehem, illuminating the place where it is placed: in the family, at work, in the community, or even in the vastness of the internet, wherever the darkness of indifference is in particular need of the light of Christ's truth and love.

On this holy night of Christmas, Christmas Eve, and on all the blessed feast days, when the whole universe glorifies our Lord Jesus Christ, born in Bethlehem, may every parish and every family of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada become a small manger where Christ will dwell, bringing Peace, Love and Hope to the world.

Christ is Born!

With fervent prayers for all of you,

‡ **Ilarion**, Archbishop of Winnipeg and the Central Eparchy
Metropolitan of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada

‡ **Andriy**, Bishop of Toronto and the Eastern Eparchy