

## **Metropolitan Ilarion (Ohienko)**

*Come to me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (Mt. 11:28).* Today we celebrate a great, holy, and most joyous Mystery. We awaited the Saviour for many years, for many ages the entire world awaited salvation, and finally the Son of God came to earth, was born of the Virgin Mary and became man. He lived thirty-three years on earth as a man, teaching us God's Truth. With His salvific teaching the Son of God shows us the right Path, how we should live in the world that we might be happy and prepare for Eternal Beatitude.

Christ's teaching was new and unexpected in His time, but very quickly captured the thoughts of mankind, especially among the poor and unfortunate.

Christ, the Son of God and God Himself, called loudly to the world: *Come to me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (Mt. 11:28).* This call of Christ was heard by all the unfortunate and they came to Him.

But the mighty of this world set themselves in opposition to Christ, to the extent that His teaching was directed against them. They stood against Him and crucified Him on the Cross.

But Christ, being God, rose from the dead on the third day as was prophesied.

The Incarnation on earth of the Son of God and His glorious Resurrection are the greatest Mysteries of our Holy Faith. The greatest and the most glorious! The greatest and the most joyful!

Christ, having fulfilled His mission on the earth (as had been foreseen yet before the ages), did not leave us orphans. He ascended to Paradise and sat at the right hand of the Father. He will return to judge the living and those resurrected from the dead.

The Son of God did not leave the world orphaned – in His place on the earth He left His Holy Church, in which he remains forever as its Head.

The Church represents Christ on earth. The Church continues the teaching of Christ.

The Church shows mankind the path to true happiness on the Earth and eternal salvation after death.

Christ descended from Heaven to earth and drew earth closer to Heaven. The Son of God, our Lord, Jesus Christ will remain with us always in the Church and will join us eternally in the mystery of the Most-holy Eucharist. Through the reception of the Body and Blood of Christ every person is deified, for they are united with their Lord God.

This is indeed a great and glorious and salvific act of God: His all-good Incarnation, His Divine Resurrection and His grace-filled mysteries instituted for us – the Church and Most-holy Communion.

Our Church is conciliar, that is, common for us all, and we all must take part in her life. Let us all hurry to Church, for she contains within herself our earthly happiness. Our eternal salvation is also found in her.

But let us not forget that all of us, as sons of Christ, should live virtuously – in love, harmony, and unity.

We should be Christians not only in name, but in reality!

All of us should be orthodox – in Church, at home, everywhere – we should do everything taught to us by the Lord God in the Holy Scriptures, and we should take part in the Holy Mysteries which He left us for our salvation.

We should all have the deep conviction in our heart and soul that Holy Communion is our greatest salvation. Holy Communion is the greatest Mystery of the Church – this is the Mystery of Mysteries. Without Holy Communion a person is empty.

So let us hurry to receive Holy Communion. He who receives Communion is a true Christian. He who receives Communion is a true member of Christ's Church.

He who does not receive Communion does not belong to Christ's Church and for him Christ is not risen!

And he, who does not receive Holy Communion may not hold a position of leadership in the parish, on Council, or any other church institution, since if he does not receive Holy Communion he is not a member of the Church!

Christ rose from the dead and ascended into Heaven, but He did not leave us orphans. He told us to receive Holy Communion, that through it we would be able to fully and completely be united to Him!

Christ rose that we also might rise to a fuller, new spiritual life. And it comes then, when we with Faith and Love receive the Body and Blood of Christ.

Without Christ's Resurrection the Christian Faith would not exist, and without Holy Communion there would be no Church.

*Source: Herald (Visnyk), Ukrainian Greek-Orthodox Church of Canada, N 8, 1960*