



УКРАЇНСЬКА ПРАВОСЛАВНА ЦЕРКВА В КАНАДІ
UKRAINIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OF CANADA
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April 26, 2016

Statement

Episcopate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada
On the 30th Year of Remembrance of the Chernobyl Tragedy

Reverend clergy and beloved faithful of the UOCC,

Glory to Jesus Christ!

In this Holy Week before the Feast Day of the Resurrection, we remember the suffering of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. During this week, we also remember the suffering of the Ukrainian people thirty years ago on April 26, 1986, when the explosion of the fourth reactor at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant led to the world's worst environmental disaster of the 20th century and to an enormous human tragedy touching the lives of millions for generations to come. The consequences of the accident were many. The radiation affected the health of the population and natural environment, farmland and water resources among others effects.

This thirtieth anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster gives humanity pause to reflect on our relationship to the environment and on how we make use of the earth's bountiful resources. The Orthodox Church views the world as a sacred gift from the Creator. The Ecumenical Patriarchate has initiated a day of prayer for the environment on September 1/14. As His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I explains its purpose, "On this day, we especially beseech the supreme God to gladden His creation so that human life therein may be joyful and fruitful. For we suppress nature in such a manner that unforeseeable and undesirable changes occur to the climate and environment, which are negatively affected in their normal functions with consequent implications for life itself." Furthermore, the Ecumenical Throne has pioneered an ecological effort for the protection of the planet, organizing a number of international ecological symposia and tirelessly making presentations on global ecological conditions. In this light, the Chernobyl disaster provides a lesson not only for the Ukrainian people, but for the entire world about what can happen when we place our voracious appetite for consumer materialism ahead of proper stewardship of the natural resources God placed in our care.

We may also draw lessons about the human impact of the Chornobyl accident. Seven percent of Ukraine's population, or well over three million people, has been directly impacted by the accident – some died from radiation-related illnesses, others have life-long health effects from the radiation, and many more had to be relocated, losing their homes and livelihoods. The Chornobyl accident vividly highlights that the greed of a few, not only may cause lasting harm to the natural environment, but tremendous suffering for millions.

2016 has been declared in Ukraine to be the year of remembrance of the liquidators of the Chornobyl accident and those who perished in the catastrophe, according to a decree of the President of Ukraine issued last December. Therefore, we join our brothers and sisters in Christ in Ukraine and around the world in prayer for the eternal memory of the courageous emergency workers who gave their lives in the first days of the explosion, as well as for the many innocent victims who perished from Chornobyl accident-related illnesses. We also pray for the well-being of the survivors who must live forever with the health consequences of this great tragedy.

Indeed, the theme of suffering that we remember during this Holy Week, Christ's suffering on the Cross, remains fresh for the Ukrainian people who continue to suffer thirty years later from the Chornobyl disaster.

For You are a merciful God and love mankind, and unto You we ascribe glory, to the Father, and the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages. Amen.

With Archpastoral Blessings,

† *YURIJ, Metropolitan*

† *ILARION, Bishop*

† *ANDRIY, Bishop*