



**Greetings
from the Office of the Chancellor
for the New Ecclesiastical Year**

“A New Beginning!”

Слава Ісусу Христу!

Glory to Jesus Christ!

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For many of us, the month of September is associated with ‘new beginnings’. The vacation season has come to an end. Children return to their classrooms. And at the workplace, the pace intensifies after the summer slowdown. As the days grow shorter, life returns to ‘normal.’

In the Church, the 14th of September, the initiation of a new Ecclesiastical Year, also marks ‘new beginnings.’ The annual cycle of feasts and fasts begins anew. Church school classes and other opportunities for spiritual formation are offered. Parish ministries and activities are intensified. Parish life also returns to ‘normal.’ Exciting as we find new beginnings to be, we should never be content with a mere return to ‘normal.’ Let it be made clear that when the Church limits itself merely to maintaining the status quo, the ‘norm,’ it cannot and will not grow spiritually, numerically or in any other way.

The essence of the Gospel challenges us to ‘repent,’ to ‘begin anew,’ to ‘change’ our minds and our hearts, our attitudes and our direction in pursuit of things that transcend the ‘norm,’ and enables us to experience that which the world sees as anything but ‘normal’—the Kingdom of God and its righteousness.

There was nothing ‘normal’ about our Saviour’s ministry. “No man has ever spoken as this man speaks,” we read in Scripture. In His words and actions, in His teaching, preaching and healing, Jesus Christ revealed that mankind’s ‘norm’ is not found in this world, but in the life of the world to come. And while we live ‘in the world,’ we are not ‘of the world.’ Pursuing that which the world considers ‘abnormal’—virtue, wisdom, vision, repentance and a life lived in an intimate union with God and His people—is at the very center of His ministry, and that of His Body, the Church. It is a ‘new beginning’ that beckons to us, not only at the beginning of the Ecclesiastical Year, but every day of our lives.

However, without vision, without faith, without a commitment to proclaim the wonderful things God indeed does for us, it is impossible to transcend the ‘norm,’ to approach the new Ecclesiastical Year renewed and refreshed by the very Spirit Who makes all things new, or to grow ‘from glory to glory.’ Pursuing the familiar may bring with it comfort, control and predictability, but the Gospel is not about these things. Rather, it challenges us continually to take a leap of faith and to pursue these things built upon a vision of the Church that focuses on how things could be, rather than how things always have been.

The vision of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada is to communicate her teachings and value to her faithful, as individuals and as a community, to foster an environment of love and caring that will challenge us to pursue our fundamental human calling of deification—the process by which human persons grow God-like.

Therefore, through our stewardship in the Church and through the contribution of our individual spiritual gifts, material blessings and personal talents, individually and collectively we are asked to assist the Church in its pastoral work by witnessing God’s grace and love for humanity through our Church’s heritage and traditions, and to ensure that all who seek Christ might find Him. We, individually and collectively, **MUST** take part in the efforts of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada to achieve its mission goals through:

- The understanding of the Church’s clearly articulated principles as they impact the spiritual life of the Church through instruction in our faith and Holy Traditions;
- An increased sense of responsibility among clergy and laity regarding the well-being of our Church-life through both personal and financial stewardship;
- More harmonious and intensive co-participation among the administrative structures of the Church (Consistory, Diocesan and parish councils, church committees and commissions) and her functional components (bishops, clergy, laity) when executing policies and programs mandated by the Church;
- Maintaining an active role in the development of the Church and its parish components; and
- Through the development of humanitarian, social and charitable programs in our respective parish communities.

As we begin this new Ecclesiastical Year, let us together take the leap of faith into the future, approaching our personal lives and the vision of our parish communities with renewed zeal. Let us intensify our pursuit of the Kingdom of God which, while yet to be fully revealed, is already fully present in the life of the Church. At the Divine Liturgy we sing, “We have seen the True Light, we have received the Heavenly Spirit, we have found the true faith, worshipping the Undivided Trinity, Who has saved us.” What better time than now to transform these words into action, action that is hardly ‘normal’ in the world’s eyes, yet fully expected in the Lord’s.

It is this vision that gives to the Orthodox faithful a sense of holy joy as they enter upon the Church New Year, grounding our soul in the seasons of the Church rather than in the seasons of earthly life. We feel a holy excitement, an anticipation of sacred joy as we look forward to the Feasts of the Church Year. In those feasts, we will do more than simply commemorate Christ. We will actually enter into His Holy Spirit by whose living, mystical power, the events of Christ’s earthly life are experienced—not so much as

historical as living events, that we are alive in the Spirit today as they were yesterday, and as they will be tomorrow.

And so, we greet the new Ecclesiastical Year with joy. We look forward to another year of learning and practicing the Mysteries of Christ, folding our daily life into the Spirit that animates the body of the Church in her liturgical life and festal celebrations. In the Eucharistic joy of those Feasts, we shall enter body and soul into the mystery of Christ's Incarnation, His Death and Resurrection, His Ascension into Heaven, and the outpouring of His Holy Spirit on all flesh on the blessed Feast of Pentecost. By submitting ourselves to the Way of Christ and to His Holy Commandments, our earthly life finds it is no longer we who live, but Christ Who lives in us. So that, as we die in the Lord, it is this body of death that dies, while our soul and body that were created by God in the beginning as good, begin to live in the crucified and risen Body of Christ, His Holy Church, the fullness of Him Who is all in all.

Filled with love, enthusiasm and accountability, let us all, with one spirit and heart, once again, unite our resources, resolve and implore our loving God that He grant unto us the Grace and blessing to succeed in our noble purpose and goals.

Let us pray, invoking the Grace and Blessings of our Lord upon us and our families, and may we have a most blessed and fruitful New Ecclesiastical Year.

With these words, I greet you with the New Ecclesiastical Year.

Glory to Jesus Christ!

With love and best wishes, I remain,

—*Rt. Rev. Protopresbyter Victor Lakusta,*
Chancellor
Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada