

At the glorious celebration of the Nativity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we warmly greet and embrace all the children, young adults, adults and seniors of our Holy Ukrainian Orthodox Church throughout the world. We want you to know that with full trust in God's promise, our love and prayers as your Spiritual Fathers encompass you during this Nativity Holy Day when you gather for worship and fellowship with friends and family.

The Nativity of Christ is the Feast of Light. On Christmas Eve, the glory of the Lord enveloped the shepherds with the pure light from heaven and they were filled with great fear as the angel of the Lord gave them the Good News of the birth of the Saviour. The God-Child born at Bethlehem is the Word of God made flesh, the true Light that enlightens all who are born into this world.

The Nativity of Christ is the Feast of Peace. The angels from heaven proclaimed it so as they announced the birth of the Son of God and sang in the very first Christmas carol: "Glory to God in the highest and peace to his people on earth." Every Nativity season, the words, "Sleep in heavenly peace" are sung in our churches, in our homes, in the streets and at Bethlehem.

The Nativity of Christ is the Feast of Love. It is a mystery for which we need eyes wide-open and hearts renewed to adore Love Incarnate. We are compelled to share that Love with love for our brothers and sisters, especially those who suffer most the consequences of disaster and economic crisis, those who suffer loneliness, pain and infirmity. Remember, the Nativity experience cannot exist when we block or ignore such Love. Our Lord reminds us that only those who know and share that Love with hearts like those of a child can fully understand and live the Nativity experience. Those who enclose themselves in selfishness will go through the Nativity Feast without comprehending and celebrating it in their hearts and in their lives.

A Child – born for us! Light! Peace! Love! These are the images we treasure during this holy season. Yet, even as He lies in the manger, we can already foresee the impending suffering of the Cross in the senseless slaughter of the Holy Innocents to appease the vanity of the ruling Herod. Are the evil Herods of today any different? In spite of what was to come, that Child grew and matured into the One Who would save our souls. Our lives are a mix of good and evil, of joy and sorrow, of hope and despair, of happiness and pain. As we look upon this Child with awe, we are very much aware of the slaughter of children today who never get a chance to live! This Child causes us to fall down in worship, praise and thanksgiving; the holy innocents of our own time cause us to question the values of a world where one person's choice trumps another person's life!

The Nativity of Jesus Christ is a time to rejoice and give thanks for the gift and blessings of life. It is also a time to be generous toward others who may not be so blessed – so that the life of each and of all might be nurtured and supported. Together, we turn to the Author of Life in profound gratitude. May your prayer, worship and acts of charity to those in need at this Nativity celebration lead you to a profound encounter with Christ that

you, perhaps, never considered possible! It is the power of giving one's "self" away – as did Jesus Christ, Who is and always has been One with God the Father and the Holy Spirit gave of Him-"self" – that transforms us as the human creation, that transfigures each of us as individuals of that creation and brings us closer to true unity with God.

Beloved clergy, brothers and sisters in Christ, we send you our sincere Nativity greetings in the Lord and we pray that the Light, Peace and Love of that first Nativity shine in your lives and through you into the lives of all who cross your path, for when we bear witness to that Light, Peace and Love, we are on the path leading to the realization of what we were created for and to our ultimate goal for eternity

May you have a loving and holy Nativity and a blessed New Year 2015 in our Lord!

With prayers and hierarchical blessings,

† **YURIJ**, Metropolitan

Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada

† **ANTONY**, Metropolitan

Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA

Locum Tenens of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Diaspora

† **IOAN**, Archbishop

Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Diaspora

† **JEREMIAH**, Archbishop

Ukrainian Orthodox Eparchy of Brazil and South America

† **ILARION**, Bishop

Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada

† **ANDRIY**, Bishop

Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada

† **DANIEL**, Bishop

Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA