



## **Nativity Epistle of the Permanent Conference of Ukrainian Orthodox Bishops Outside the Borders of Ukraine**

*To the God-beloved Pastors,*

*Honoured Monastics, and all Faithful Children of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the Diaspora and Ukraine,*

*“Today, the Virgin gives birth to the Transcendent One and the earth offers a cave to the Unapproachable One. Angels with shepherds give glory. The magi journey with a star. For unto us is born a young Child, the Pre-eternal God” (Kondak of the Nativity of Christ).*

### **Christ is Born!**

Once again, according to the Mercy of God, we celebrate the Feast of the Nativity. Faithful hearts, full of gratitude to God, again glorify the Pre-eternal Word, the Divine Christ Child, Who for us and our salvation came down to earth and was incarnated from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man. Today the soul of every Christian with great spiritual joy cries out “Christ is Born -Glorify Him! Christ from Heaven - Let us meet Him! Christ on Earth – be exalted! Let all the earth sing to the Lord! (St. Gregory the Theologian).

The coming of the Son of God to earth was the most important event in the entire history of the human race. It is an event which the human mind cannot fully comprehend, the wonder of wonders: “great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16).

The Nativity of Christ was the event which ushered in a new cultural life rooted in love for God and neighbor, an event which initiated the Kingdom of Christ on earth. Many things have happened and happen on our earthly planet. But none of them have been discussed and preached for ages as has the event of the Nativity of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

The Nativity of Christ is for all of us a great and joyful feast. St. John Chrysostom writes: “The day of Christ’s Nativity is the most important day among all the feasts, for it is shown to be the mother of all feasts. Without the Nativity of Christ there would be no Resurrection.” Humanity awaited the coming into the world of the Saviour with great impatience. The Lord, yet in the earthly paradise of Eden, after the sin of Adam and Eve said that He would send them a Saviour Who would return to them and to the entire human race their lost happiness and conquer the power of the devil.

Adam’s sin is the history of the sin of all mankind and every person individually. The transgression of Adam is repeated in each one of us when we turn from God and commit sin.

The greatest and deepest mystery of the Christian faith is the mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God. The Pre-eternal God becomes a small child without ceasing to be God. As St. John the Evangelist writes, “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (Jn. 1:14).

Christ “for the sake of us men and for our salvation came down from the heavens and took flesh from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became man” so that He might destroy the barrier between man and God which arose due to human sin. And every time we Christians celebrate the Nativity of Christ a meeting takes place in our heart and soul with God Himself. We meet the Messiah – Christ – in the Mystery of the Eucharist. Through Holy Communion our human flesh is filled with His Divine power, which strengthens us spiritually and physically. We meet the Saviour in the other mysteries of our Orthodox Faith, which open to us the path to eternal life. We meet Christ in our daily life, sensing in everything His care and presence. And so every year Christ is born in the hearts and souls of faithful people.

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

In 2018 we celebrated the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Ukrainian Orthodox Churches in the USA and in Canada. We thank God for all His grace and bounties poured out upon us in the past. We beseech Him that in the coming century the Lord would continue to preserve and protect our Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the diaspora.

We especially beseech the Divine Christ Child that in this new year He would bless our ancestral homeland of Ukraine with peace, spiritual and economic growth, and our God-beloved Ukrainian people with unity, brotherly love, and a united Orthodox Church in Ukraine which is recognized by all other local Orthodox Churches.

We extend our gratitude to the Mother Church – the Great Church of Constantinople, and especially to His All-Holiness, Patriarch Bartholomew and the Holy Synod for all that they have done on behalf of the daughter Church, the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, during the past year of 2018.

We beseech Christ the Saviour, who said “I will build my Church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.” (Mt. 16:18), that in the new year the Lord will preserve His One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church from schism.

From sincere hearts and the depth of our souls we greet all of you on the occasion of the great feast of the Nativity of our Lord, the New Year of God’s goodness 2019, and the Holy Theophany. We prayerfully wish you God’s limitless mercies.

May the Newly-born in Bethlehem Lord and Saviour of world grant all of you good physical health, spiritual peace, familial warmth, joy, and prosperity.

Bowing before the manger in Bethlehem, we offer the New-born Christ Child our sincere and heartfelt prayers, and thank Him for all that we have.

May the joy of the Nativity enter into every Christian heart, be present within every family, and ever abide among all of you.

**Christ is Born! Glorify Him!**

*With Hierarchical Blessings,*

*† YURIJ, Metropolitan, Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada*

*† ANTONY, Metropolitan, Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA and in the Diaspora*

† JEREMIAH, Archbishop, Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Brazil and South America

† DANIEL, Archbishop, Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA and Western Europe

† ILARION, Bishop, Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada

† ANDRIY, Bishop, Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada