



**PASTORAL LETTER
FROM THE UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC
BISHOPS OF CANADA
ON THE OCCASION
OF THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD 2019-2020**

To the Reverend Clergy, Monastics, Seminarians and Laity
of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in Canada:

Christ is born! Let Us Glorify Him!

*The people walking in darkness have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness
a light has dawned. (Isaiah 9:2)*

*“God is With Us, Understand This All You Nations!
And Be Humbled, For God Is With Us!”*

This is a glorious and wonderful refrain sung at our liturgical services during this season. We have to admit it is very memorable and we might find ourselves singing this truth throughout the year, particularly when spirits are low, and we need to remind ourselves of God’s presence in our personal lives and the life of our church.

In fact, it points to a mystery about the human person – presence. Why is “presence” so important to us? How is it that “presence” can change our disposition? When a person is present to us it changes how we think and feel and act. Even more so is the case when we are present to those who are present to us.

For instance, when a parent gives a child a warning not to sneak a snack just before a meal, it makes a big difference if the parent stays in the room or leaves the room. Or if a parent is there to calm the pain of a child who fell and hurt themselves. Likewise, if you are driving and, say, you’re late for an appointment. The temptation to speed is more under control if you see a police car in your rear-view mirror. Yet how comforting is the presence of a police officer to assist in roadside trouble. Or if you are overwhelmed by those you love at a surprise party in your honour. The presence of so many you care for completely changes your heart.

The same is so true of our awareness of Jesus in our lives. Hopelessness and despair can be dealt with much more easily when we are aware of God’s presence. This is especially true for those who find themselves in armed conflict while they defend human dignity against unjust aggressors. It is true for those fighting addictions, fighting loneliness, struggling with gender or sexual identity or battling against any unfair treatment by others because of someone’s prejudice. Any challenge a person faces is most difficult if they are alone and what is worse, it is more difficult when they are not alone, but they certainly *feel* alone. This can lead to depression, and in our opinion, is one of the worst lies about any person’s reality.

The good news that God is with us is central to this Christmas season. May the Holy Spirit give you the grace to encounter Christ so that your awareness of His presence is undeniable all through your day. Our Church services and family traditions speak of his presence when we encounter each other, for indeed we encounter Christ in each other, especially those who face mental or physical distress. In turn, may your awareness of His presence be a light to those who struggle to dwell on this important truth. He is the one who loves us and gives us hope in the midst of all we experience.

May your celebration of this profound truth this Christmas be a time to encounter Jesus Christ in your spouse, in your family members, in your parish that is Vibrant because you are part of it. May you be aware of the presence of the Jesus, Mary and Joseph that give us the gift of the Holy Family present in your personal and parish family. And may this awareness bear fruit in your life throughout 2020.

God is with us! Christ is Born!

Sincerely in Christ,

- +Lawrence Huculak, OSBM Metropolitan Archbishop of Winnipeg
- +Michael Wiwchar, CSsR Eparch Emeritus of Saskatoon
- +Severian Yakymyshyn, OSBM Eparch Emeritus of New Westminster
- +David Motiuk, Eparchial Bishop of Edmonton
- +Stephen Chmilar, Eparch Emeritus of Toronto
- +Ken Nowakowski, Eparchial Bishop of New Westminster
- +Bryan Bayda, CSsR Eparchial Bishop of Saskatoon and Administrator of Eparchy of Toronto