



UKRAINIAN GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH
SVIATOSLAV SHEVCHUK
MAJOR ARCHBISHOP OF KYIV-HALYCH

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PASTORAL LETTER
OF HIS BEATITUDE SVIATOSLAV
TO YOUTH ON PALM SUNDAY

Beloved in Christ Youth in Ukraine and abroad!

Palm Sunday, the day of Christ's triumphant entry in Jerusalem, is traditionally for me and the entire leadership of our Church an opportunity to address you with a special letter. I always cherish this opportunity because I consider it a special privilege to reflect together and with you seek answers to questions and needs, which I have heard expressed at various encounters and conversations with you throughout the year.

This year, in spite of the unique life circumstances in which we find ourselves, you, young people, without going to church due to the restrictions that have been placed on us, can listen to or read this appeal of ours. The Church comes to you, wherever you may be: we hope that the voice which will be heard on screens of various sizes and formats, will resonate in your hearts, lift up and inspire each one of you.

It's a wonderful thing to be young, but also not easy. Being a youth means having an open heart, an inquisitive mind, and a rebellious character that reacts sharply to all forms of injustice, every distortion, any wrong, which adults have learned to ignore or even exploit. For a young person today the challenge increases with the fast pace and virtualization of the global world, the economic crisis and pandemic. For young Ukrainians there is the additional factor of an unjust war of invasion in the east of the country, a war in which for the seventh year now, sons and daughters of our Fatherland continue to die, while defending peace and the future.

Uncertainty and fear have enveloped the world. Motivational speakers will probably earn millions talking on the topic of "How to live in a time of incertitude." High-school graduates worry about how they will do their SATs and apply to places of higher learning, while university and college graduates wonder whether they will find a job in a world that seems to heading rapidly towards economic crisis. Proprietors of small coffee shops are anxious about whether they will be able to reopen once the quarantine is over, programmers – whether orders from large international companies will be cancelled, as the financial stability of their businesses depend on them. One has the impression that today

there isn't a single young person who does not worry about the uncertainty that hangs over us.

Pope Francis in his address, "Urbi et orbi" (To the City of Rome and the World), which was recently given on the occasion of Special Prayer for an end to the coronavirus pandemic, compares the current situation to a storm on the sea. The entire world is afraid, disoriented and lost, as if sitting in a single boat tossed by waves. In this storm we sense our fragility, our mortality, possibly our inexperience and arrogance.

At the same time, we, Christians, know that in this boat on a turbulent sea God Himself is with us. He became Man and died on the cross, so that we "may have life and have it abundantly" (Jn 10:10). Remembering the Resurrection keeps us from falling into despair, and helps us to continue rowing and, with trust in the Lord, overcome the waves.

The road to the Resurrection begins with the triumphant entry into Jerusalem.

The entry into Jerusalem is the beginning of a new era. In his passion, death on the cross and Resurrection our Lord established a New Covenant with all humanity. This new pact no longer involves just one people, is no longer limited to a particular land or culture, but embraces all – each and every one of you. At the Last Supper, which we will prayerfully commemorate this week, Christ gave to his disciples the Mystery of the Eucharist – the Mystery of his Body and Blood, by which this Covenant is established and sealed. He clearly stated that the Blood of the New Covenant is poured out "for you and for many" (see Mt 26:28, Mk 14:24, Lk 22:20). This is our security guarantee in unsure times – He redeemed us, made us his people, has poured out and is pouring out his Blood for us.

In greeting the Saviour who entered Jerusalem with new tree shoots, the new branches of humanity – the children of Israel – became bearers and heralds of a new time, a new era, a social paradigm, that changed the world. The history of humanity, especially the history of Europe in the second millennium, demonstrates that after dark times, after tragedies of plague and cholera, human society transforms itself, opening a new age in the development of civilization. Many understand that this is precisely what is happening before our very eyes, and that we will be witnesses to such "tectonic movements" that will change the foundations of modern states, economic systems, and methods of organizing a common world community.

The future fate of country-states, systems, and all of global society will depend, above all, on whether the "global Jerusalem" of today will open its doors for God, who in Christ the Saviour brings peace, wisdom and hope. No less important – that into this "global Jerusalem" being restored by God, the youth enter not with empty hands, as mere passive spectators or simply a "human resource." Young people must, just as at the entry of Christ into Jerusalem, express themselves, take on as a foundation authentic values that make a person human, and thus, as if with green branches, welcome the Saviour-Messiah. Only then, when the youth of today sing to him "Hosanna" will this new world become a world of and for humanity, where a culture of life, not death, will be built – a world where human life, the value of which we have rediscovered in a time of epidemic, will become the

cornerstone for democracy, international law, and new global economic relations. If this does not happen and no one picks up these young “palm branches,” then the emergence of new deadly viruses is only a matter of time. However, instead of trembling before invisible enemies, all of us, especially you, the youth, must united in faith and solidarity of action. Let us remember the words of Pope Francis: “Prayer and quiet service: these are our victorious weapons.”

Therefore, we stand before the next change of an age. We do not know what the new age will be like. However, we clearly understand, that you, in fact, are its people. Be heralds of a new social justice, of a new paradigm of mercy, of new relations of openness and service.

We approach this year’s Easter celebrations in one of the most difficult periods of humanity in a new era of globalization. Over the years we have enjoyed the benefits of networking and connectedness, and now we find ourselves in the midst of a global quarantine. This new challenge requires from us careful creativity and a developed system of service. And in this we need the assistance and support of a creative and inventive youth. You are the true experts! Many a grandson or granddaughter helped their baba follow the Liturgy online, taught their dido how to use the internet, gifted them their old computer, showed them how to pay for services online and insisted that they stay at home, while personally providing them with their necessities. How many charitable social initiatives have appeared in various corners of Ukraine to help those who are the most vulnerable!

On behalf of our elderly today, the Church says to you: “Thank you, sincerely!” Keep doing what you do and develop your service, taking due care for your own personal safety; direct your energy towards those who need it. It’s been a while since many of us have spent so much time at home—a chance to listen to all the family stories! As you find yourselves under one roof and wait out this quarantine thrust upon us, relate to one another, do things together with your loved ones. This is another chance to discover the gift of the person that is next to you! Let us not doubt that in this you will be successful.

This epidemic that our generation is experiencing is like a smack across the side of the head for an arrogant humanity—in order to separate the grain from the chaff and to become aware once again of what’s most important. We understand that the economic crisis now emerging will hit the most vulnerable the hardest—our families, the elderly, and the young. Its negative effect will be felt by all. At the same time, we are also profoundly convinced that this crisis is a test for mercy, an occasion for good and service. We would especially like for you, young people, to know that your Mother-Church will undergo these challenges together with you, embracing you and accompanying you and your loved ones with her ceaseless prayer.

We stand at the threshold of a new world. What it will be like – depends on all of us.

Today, more than ever, is the time for your boldest dreams: to tame the universe, to find a cure for cancer, to conquer epidemics, to build a just economic system, to protect the sick and helpless, to seek out alternate sources of energy, to construct means of transportation that don’t harm the planet, etc. Dare to dream! Dream big! Desire greatness!

Invite Christ into your dreams! Be certain that he will help. Jesus Christ has already conquered our greatest fear and given us himself as a limitless source of hope and life. On this day of our Lord's Entry into Jerusalem, open to Him the full expanse of your heart. In receiving our Saviour into your personal life, follow his lead into that unknown "tomorrow" which he himself will create for us, through his glorious and joyful Resurrection!

The blessing of the Lord be upon you!



Given in Kyiv,
at the Patriarchal Cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ,
on the day of Venerable St. James, the Confessor, Bishop of Catania,
April 3 (March 21), 2020 A.D.