



UKRAINIAN GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH
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CHRISTMAS PASTORAL LETTER
OF HIS BEATITUDE SVIATOSLAV

Most Reverend Archbishops and Metropolitans,
God-loving Bishops, Very Reverend Clergy, Venerable Monastics,
Dearly Beloved Brothers and Sisters,
in Ukraine and throughout the world

*And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby
wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.
(Luke 2:12).*

Christ is born! Glorify Him!

Beloved in Christ!

Today the whole universe welcomes the Savior born among us: angels sing, shepherds worship, kings travel with a star. The peace of God descends upon a confused and troubled humanity, which receives the light of hope that shines over the whole world from lowly Bethlehem! Christmas is the feast of God – Jesus the Creator, “through whom all things were made” – approaching man, his creation. What an incomprehensible mystery! The Word of God becomes incarnate in his own image: God becomes man, created in his image and likeness. He becomes one of us, lives next to us, shares all that we have, takes on human weaknesses and suffering, so that we can feel His unwavering closeness and live in the joyful awareness that at every moment “God is with us!”

In the Nativity of Christ, the infinite God limits Himself, the Almighty enters into the frailty of a newborn child “Though he was in the form of God, he did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men” (Phil. 2:6–7). God the Father, through His Son in human flesh, offers Himself to humankind by the power of grace of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, it is this Divine self-limitation that opens the door for us to God’s limitlessness in love and power. Through Him, man is granted access to the fullness of life in Christ: both to the fullness of human dignity and greatness, and to the fullness of communion with eternity. For, as the

Apostle Paul teaches, our loving Father, in giving us Jesus, willed "that in Him all the fullness should dwell" (Col. 1:19).

Coming to us in the form of a servant, the Lord plunges into the darkness of human indifference and hatred, into each person's pain and suffering: the child and old man held captive under torture, the father and mother who weep over a lost child. As a Child, He weeps with the families who have lost loved ones from Russian missiles and wipes away the tears of those who have lost everything — their relatives, property, city, or village.

However, He plunges into our darkness to become our Light and, where evil sows death, to open up heaven, so that those who weep can, together with the shepherds, receive the tidings of joy from the angel who proclaims this Christmas night: "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger" (Lk 2:10-12).

Celebrating Christmas means accepting the joy that comes not from men but from God; not from earth but from heaven; not from human success but from divine self-sacrifice for our salvation.

For us today, celebrating Christmas means also becoming capable of self-limitation, in order to open a place in our hearts (our homes and our parishes) for Jesus with Mary and Joseph. Self-sacrifice out of love for God and neighbor brings heavenly joy, because we create a place of life and salvation for those who are threatened with injury or death by the cruelty of war. Joy is born from our becoming participants in the protection and preservation of human life, especially of the weakest and least protected among us. If today you are looking for a sign, a signal and a direction marker to where to find joy, harken the angelic words: "And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby..."

So that this joy does not pass us by, let us sacrifice something of ourselves for the sake of the weakness of our neighbor! Like shepherds, let us leave our "comfort zone", let us hurry to the Bethlehem of today, which may be not far from us: among the weak and vulnerable in our home, city, or village. Let us visit them, seeking that joy, and sharing what we ourselves have already received. Then our caroling will become all-powerful, dispelling the darkness on earth and opening the heavens for God's light among us.

Today, celebrating Christmas in Ukraine is both a challenge and a Christian feat! The enemy of the human race is trying to plunge us into cold and darkness, not only physical darkness, depriving us of electricity and heat, but also into the darkness of despair, disbelief, manipulation, and trading away the fate of our people in vain attempts to appease the criminal.

What is happening every night in Ukrainian cities and villages goes far beyond the limits of war, as understood in the civilized world. Before us is not just a war, but a deliberate, systematic, calculated, and technologically sophisticated mass murder of innocents: women, the elderly, and children, whom the enemy burns alive in their own homes every night with missiles and drones. Today, Ukraine is like that weeping mother, about whom the prophet speaks: "A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter

weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more" (Jer. 31:15).

But amidst this darkness, the heavenly light of Christ breaks through. So let us celebrate boldly and joyfully, because celebrating Christmas in Ukraine is to be victorious! And abroad, it means standing, covering our sisters and brothers in Ukraine with prayer and sharing in the victory. Among us, in Ukraine and abroad, is born our Savior – Christ! They want to plunge us into darkness and cold, but we warm and illuminate each other with open hearts, in which so much room has been found for the Baby Jesus!

In self-limitation and self-sacrifice, even in the midst of exhaustion and fatigue, we have learned to restore strength and resilience by believing that "God is with us." His weakness strengthens us, His poverty enriches us! Our rich Christian experience of faith today can enrich and gladden the whole world:

*Let us all rejoice together today:
Christ was born in a poor cave!
He became man in the last days,
All of you be comforted on earth.*

("Vozveselimsia vsi razom nyini")

But in order to celebrate Christmas every day, each one of us must make a personal choice. One of our combat commanders said to every Ukrainian: "The war will not end without you!" So also today – the self-sacrifice of Christmas requires the participation of everyone according to their calling and responsibility. The joy of Christmas will not come without you, son or daughter of our Church and our people, no matter where you live and what you do. Everyone must make their choice for the sake of Life – the Baby Jesus, who was born among us in a poor cave, laid on a bed of hay in a manger!

On this bright day of Christmas, I greet each of you with the warmth of God's unwavering closeness. I embrace those who are far from their homeland, whom the war has separated from their closest relatives, wives who are waiting for their husbands to return from the front, and children who pray that their father will return home as soon as possible.

I especially greet our little children, who are already hurrying from home to home singing ancient carols to bring Christmas greetings! May these little heralds of Ukraine's victory not leave us empty-handed!

With deep gratitude in my heart, I greet our military, volunteers, doctors, energy workers, and rescuers. You are the bearers of hope, tirelessly protecting, supporting, and preserving the lives of our long-suffering people.

I greet those who are at the front, in the occupied territories, in hospitals. I especially send Christmas greetings and best to those who have lost their homes, and to those who have given shelter – physical and spiritual – to those in need, in Ukraine or abroad. May you feel at least a little bit of home comfort and Christmas joy.

With Christ's Nativity I embrace those who mourn the loss of the dead and those missing in action, those who care for the wounded in hospitals, and those who work to return the captives and forcibly deported.

From the bottom of my heart, I extend my fatherly blessing to all of you and wish everyone, from the youngest to the oldest, the joy of God's children, a delicious kutia, a merry celebration of Christ's Nativity and a happy, victorious, peaceful, and blessed year ahead. Let us renew our ability to shine and warm one another with the light of Christmas, with carols, and prayer. Then no darkness or cold will ever overcome us!

Christ is born! Glorify Him!



Given in Kyiv
at the Patriarchal Cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ,
on the day of our father, St. Nicholas of Myra in Lycia, the Wonderworker,
the 6th of December in the 2025th Year of our Lord