



**PERMANENT CONFERENCE OF UKRAINIAN ORTHODOX
BISHOPS BEYOND THE BORDERS OF UKRAINE**

*To the Venerable and Christ-loving clergy and laity of the Ukrainian
Orthodox Church in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Europe, South
America, the United States of America and in Ukraine*

May the Grace of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ, the Love of God the Father and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all!

Dear and beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord!

CHRIST IS AMONGST US! IS AND ALWAYS SHALL BE!

Once again, the ecclesiastical calendar of our Holy Orthodox Church brings us to the spiritual journey of St. Philip's Fast, a time for all Christians to prepare for the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Throughout this fast period – known by some as Advent – we and our parish communities prepare for the celebration of the glorious Feast of the Nativity of our Lord. Sadly, for the second year, our preparation takes place as we battle the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, which confronts us and threatens us. We extend our sincere gratitude to priests, lay leaders of our parishes and parishioners who have been and will continue to ensure that our churches will be as safe as possible for people to confidently assemble for liturgical worship.

Beloved in the Lord, during this spiritual journey, we are to seek the ways in which we can place our lives into the context of the events of Bethlehem, knowing that in Christ our Savior we are claimed as God's own forever. The whole of this St. Philip's Fast and the salvation story is premised on the birth of the Child, the Incarnation – God taking on our human form out of the purest of love for us – thus offering to us hope for new life, true life with Christ our Lord at its center. It is a life that we know for not just a single Holy Day, but forever unto eternity. Our homes must be converted into “home Churches” – icon corners - around which we can gather for family prayer, beseeching of our Lord, that He will always abide in us and that we will always abide in Him. “The family that prays together stays together.”

The hope of St. Philip's Fast and the joy of Nativity season inspire us, as families, to set aside the computers, cell phones, video games social media and the like, to reach out to those in greatest need all around us, bringing the Hope and Joy of His birth to people who are sick, isolated, lonely or poor. A simple act of kindness can actually save their lives. Charities in all our communities, will welcome much needed volunteers and contributions of our time, talents and treasure, especially now as they face great difficulty in raising their operating

funds with much difficulty during the pandemic. We can assure you with certainty that your family will experience the Nativity Holy Days in an incredibly intense and rewarding way if you choose to commit yourselves to a specific Lenten outreach plan – together in the Christ Child's Name.

In your prayers this sacred season please remember those whose livelihoods have been seriously threatened by the pandemic. We think especially of people coping with bereavement at the loss of loved ones to the virus, families that cannot be together and those in care homes who can only have limited or no visits from their loved ones. We think also of those who cannot travel home for Christmas this year. As we contemplate the pandemic, we have identified greater opportunities for prayer and reflection, which may in turn inspire us to act with love during the Holy Days. To act with love – what better way could there possibly be for us to glorify the Son of God, the Christ Child, Who reveals to us – His Creation – what true LOVE is in terms of sacrifice for the good of one another. In that Love we continue to pray for all affected by this ongoing pandemic, in Love we continue to appeal to those who doubt God's ability to heal us, encouraging them to accept that healing. The Christ Child, Whose Nativity we prepare to celebrate, grew into the Savior of us all and offered Himself as the ultimate sacrifice of LOVE for our salvation.

With Archpastoral blessing to you and your loved ones this St. Philip's Fast and into the
New Year,

+ ANTONY – Metropolitan

Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA, South America and Diaspora

+ JEREMIAH – Archbishop

Ukrainian Orthodox Eparchy of South America

+ DANIEL – Archbishop

Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA and Diaspora

+ ILARION – Bishop

Locum Tenens of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada

+ ANDRIY – Bishop

Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada

