

PERMANENT CONFERENCE OF UKRAINIAN ORTHODOX BISHOPS BEYOND THE BORDERS OF UKRAINE

*2017 Epistle to the Faithful Entrusted to our Spiritual Care
at the Holy Feast of the Nativity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*

Dearly Beloved Clergy, Monastics and Faithful Brothers and Sisters,

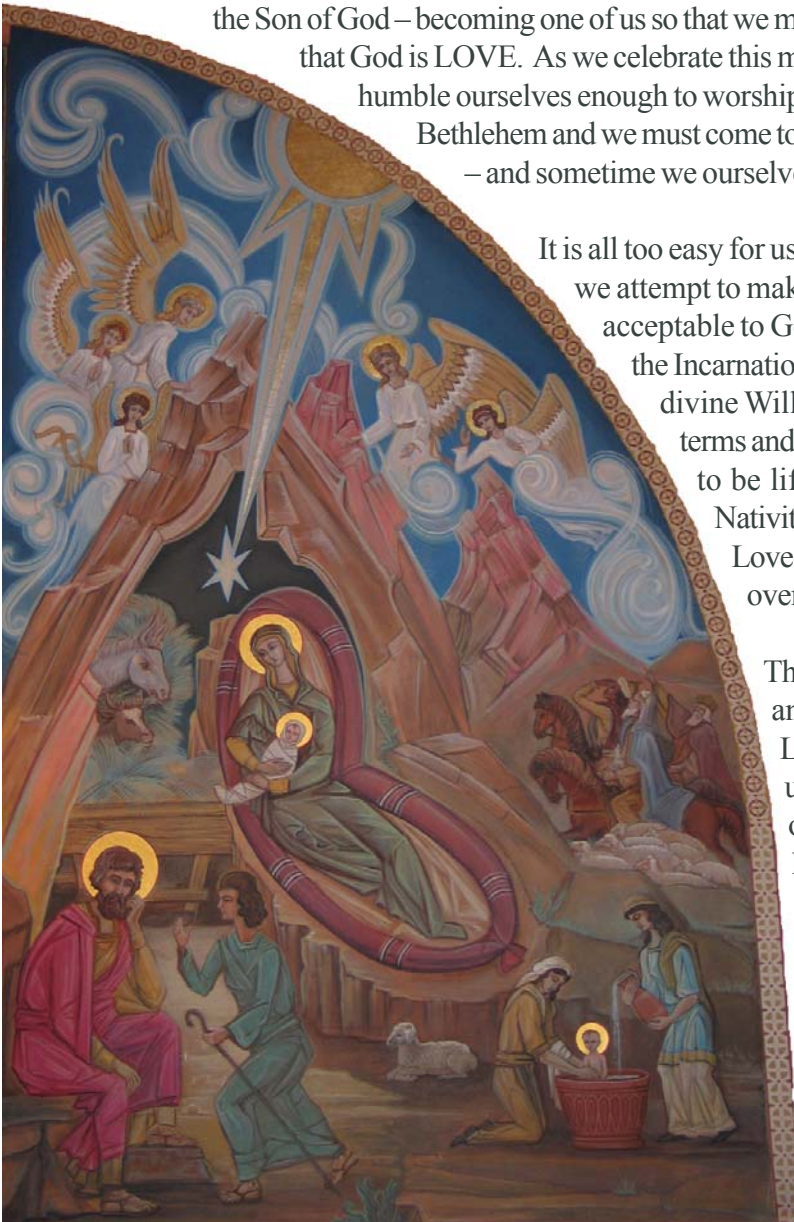
CHRIST IS BORN! LET US GLORIFY HIM!

“Behold a new and wondrous mystery. My ears resound to the Shepherd’s song, piping no soft melody, but chanting full forth a heavenly hymn. The Angels sing. The Archangels blend their voice in harmony. The Cherubim hymn their joyful praise. The Seraphim exalt His glory. All join to praise this holy feast, beholding the Godhead here on earth, and man in heaven. He Who is above, now for our redemption dwells here below; and he that was lowly is by divine mercy raised.” (St. John Chrysostom at the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ)

St. John reminds us clearly about what the Feast of the Nativity is all about – the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God – becoming one of us so that we might experience His Divinity – that we might comprehend that God is LOVE. As we celebrate this mystery of the Incarnation in our parish churches, we must humble ourselves enough to worship the Infant in the manger of a dark stable within a cave in Bethlehem and we must come to know him for Who He truly is, rather than what the world – and sometime we ourselves in our human imperfection – want Him to be.

It is all too easy for us to diminish our human dignity – a gift from God – when we attempt to make the “vices” of the world into something, or somehow, acceptable to God. We exhibit our inability to comprehend the Truth of the Incarnation, that God is LOVE and wants to lift us up to share in His divine Will, when we attempt to define that Love in simple human terms and in simple human behavior that in no way reflect our desire to be lifted up. Our prayer is that the joy of the Feast of the Nativity will elevate our behavior, lead us to one another in God’s Love and bring us to the sure knowledge that God’s Will prevails over any vice mankind can conjure up!

The Feast of the Nativity was the new beginning for mankind and God’s creation. It reminds anew each year that God’s LOVE consists of not only the Incarnation, but leads to His ultimate sacrifice for our salvation. We are the beneficiaries of that LOVE and we must share it at every moment of our lives for all mankind. We must proclaim with the angels, witnessed by the multitude of the Heavenly host, as they did to the shepherds in the field outside Bethlehem – as St. John Chrysostom describes above: “Glory to God on High on earth peace, good will toward men.” (Luke 2:14) St. Paul explains in his letter to the Ephesians, that Christ Himself, is our Peace, who has come to earth and in Him man is no longer estranged from God. We are enabled to truly live in Christ, Who is always among us!



Today Christ, as an Infant, allows us to initially experience God Incarnate with awe and joy. The Son of God enters into the history of mankind and allows us to participate in the timeless reality of the Holy Trinity – God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. May we love Him all the days of our life – always, at every moment with all our heart, our soul, our mind and our strength.

We pray for all of you who have been entrusted to our spiritual care that your only real and primary goal in life will always be to grow into unity with God, which can be accomplished only by conscious prayer, compassion and mercy for the other in our lives. We beseech your prayers especially for our unworthy selves – that God will give us the daily strength to live according to our own preaching in the Name of our Lord.

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In His All-Encompassing Love,

+ **Yurij**

Metropolitan - Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada

+ **Antony**

Metropolitan - Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA and the Diaspora

+ **Jeremiah**

Archbishop - Ukrainian Orthodox Eparchy of South America

+ **Daniel**

Archbishop-elect - Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA

+ **Ilarion**

Bishop - Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada

+ **Andriy**

Bishop - Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada