

**2022/2023 PASTORAL GREETINGS  
OF THE UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF CANADA  
ON THE OCCASION  
OF THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD**

To the Very Reverend Clergy, Monastics and Religious Sisters and Brothers, Seminarians  
and Laity of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in Canada

6/19 December 2022, Feast of Saint Nicholas

Christ is Born! Let us Glorify Him!

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

**The Legend of the Elderly Grandmother**  
*A Ukrainian Folk Tale*

As we celebrate Christmas, the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord, let us revisit the legend of the Elderly Grandmother.

It was the night the dear Christ-Child came to Bethlehem. In a country far away from Him, an old, old grandmother or “baba” sat in her snug little house by her warm fire. The wind was drifting the snow outside and howling down the chimney, but it only made baba’s fire burn more brightly.

“How glad I am that I may stay indoors,” said baba, holding her hands out to the bright blaze.

But suddenly she heard a loud rap at her door. She opened it and her candle shone on three old men standing outside in the snow. Their beards were as white as the snow, and so long that they reached the ground. Their eyes shone kindly in the light of baba’s candle, and their arms were full of precious things – boxes of jewels, and sweet-smelling oils, and ointments.

“We have travelled far, Baba,” they said, “and we stop to tell you of the Baby Prince born this night in Bethlehem. He comes to rule the world and teach all men to be loving and true. We carry Him gifts. Come with us, Baba.”

But baba looked at the drifting snow, and then inside at her cozy room and the crackling fire. “It is too late for me to go with you, good sirs,” she said, “the weather is too cold.” She went

inside again and shut the door, and the old men journeyed on to Bethlehem without her. But as baba sat by her fire, rocking, she began to think about the Little Christ-Child, for she loved all babies.

“Tomorrow I will go to find Him,” she said; “tomorrow, when it is light, and I will carry Him some toys.”

So when it was morning baba put on her long cloak and took her staff, and filled her basket with the pretty things a baby would like – gold balls and wooden toys – and she set out to find the Christ-Child.

But, oh, baba had forgotten to ask the three old men the road to Bethlehem, and they travelled so far through the night that she could not overtake them. Up and down the road she hurried, through woods and fields and towns, saying to whomsoever she met: “I go to find the Christ-Child. Where does He lie? I bring some pretty toys for His sake.”

But no one could tell her the way to go, and they all said: “Farther on, Baba, farther on.” So she travelled on and on and on for years and years – but she never found the little Christ-Child.

They say that old baba is travelling still, looking for Him. When it comes Christmas Eve, and the children are lying fast asleep, baba comes softly through the snowy fields and towns, wrapped in her long cloak and carrying her basket on her arm. With her staff she raps gently at the doors and goes inside and holds her candle close to the little children's faces.

“Is He here?” she asks. “Is the little Christ-Child here?” And then she turns sorrowfully away again, crying: “Farther on, farther on!” But before she leaves she takes a toy from her basket and lays it beside the pillow for a Christmas gift. “For His sake,” she says softly, and then hurries on through the years and forever in search of the little Christ-Child.

We celebrate Christmas this year in the context of the war in Ukraine and other places in the world. Jesus comes into the world as an infant, an innocent baby, in need of care and love. He chooses to be born in the simplicity of a manger, not in a palace as a king. As such, his humble beginnings declare him to be the Prince of Peace. His mission is to declare peace among all peoples.

As Jesus' followers, we are called to be peacemakers. Let us work towards peace in our families, among our friends, and among neighbours and strangers alike by adopting a way of life

that puts the needs of others first, and ours second. Let us “live simply so others may simply live,” a motto made famous by Gandhi, quoting Saint Elizabeth Seton.

To live simply so others may simply live means to put God first in our lives, to live according to God’s ways, to see brother and sister in each person, to satisfy the hunger and thirst in those in need, to value justice and freedom, to seek truth, to honour human dignity, to take care of mother earth so that our children and grandchildren may have a home to inherit, to have compassion, and above all to love God, neighbour and self as God loves us.

To live otherwise, that is, to live a life that values money, wealth, and power above all else, risks selling ourselves short, ending up unhappy and disappointed. Rather God wants us to be happy and to live with God forever in paradise, in the Garden of Eden, in heaven with God and all our loved ones.

The elderly grandmother – baba, missed her opportunity to see the Christ-child, and forever searches for him, unsatisfied, alone, and cold, growing ever older.

Yet, it is not too late for us. May the story of Christmas – of Jesus’ birth, of God’s presence among us – continue to inspire the world, transforming it through peace and love into the Kingdom of God here on earth.

As we celebrate the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord, may Christ, truly bless you and your family with peace, love and joy, now and in the New Year!

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

- + Lawrence Huculak, OSBM, Metropolitan Archbishop of Winnipeg; Apostolic Administrator of Saskatoon
- + David Motiuk, Eparchial Bishop of Edmonton; Apostolic Administrator of New Westminster
- + Bryan Bayda, CSsR, Eparchial Bishop of Toronto
- + Andriy Raby, Auxiliary Bishop of Winnipeg
- + Michael Wiwchar, CSsR, Bishop Emeritus of Saskatoon
- + Stephen Chmilar, Bishop Emeritus of Toronto