

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

2017-18

**To the beloved Clergy and Faithful of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church beyond the
Borders of Ukraine and on her native soil.**

Christ is born!

By the grace of God, again this year we can celebrate the great mystery of our faith - the birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ who "for us and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man." (the Nicene Creed). All creation was waiting for the arrival of the Saviour to redeem the human race from sin and death and to reconcile man with God.

Today, humanity, which was in the dark and dwelled in the kingdom of sin, death, and despair, is filled with a new joy "which had not existed until now."

Today, the prophecies of the prophets of the Old Testament about the Saviour and the Messiah are fulfilled: "Behold the Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and you shall call His name Immanuel" which is translated, " God with us" (Isaiah 7:14). The Lord sends redemption to His people (Psalm 110:9). The salvation of the human race cannot be achieved by human forces and for this reason it is necessary for God to come into the world.

Today, the heart of all of us is filled with great joy because the Saviour, who came into the world to give Himself up for us, is born.

Today, in Bethlehem of Judea, the only One who is able to grant salvation to all mankind, to cleanse us from our sins and to defeat death, is born.

Today, He is born in a lowly manger because there is no room for Him among His people.

Today, the eternal God, born as a small Child, enters the world to grant us salvation.

Today, the Saviour is born of the Virgin Mary to bring us the unearthly spiritual joy of the Incarnation. The Lord becomes like one of us; He becomes like us but without sin.

**God eternal is born today!
From heaven comes the One,
Who shall save humanity
And for this, rejoice!**

Today, the Son of God becomes the Son of man, receives human flesh through the Incarnation in the person of the Newborn Christ. Divine and human nature are united unconfusedly, inconvertibly, indivisibly, inseparably.

Today, God is humbled in the person of the Newborn Christ, the Saviour. As the Apostle Paul writes: "He made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of man" (Philippians 2: 7).

Today, God descends to earth to give us the opportunity to be deified so that our bodies can become the temples of the Holy Spirit through His grace.

Today, God lowers Himself so that we can raise-up ourselves to become children of God through His grace.

Today, the star of Bethlehem illuminates the whole world with the light of God's great grace.

Today, heaven and earth sing the Angelic song: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will among men."

Today, heaven makes peace with the earth and God makes peace with man through the birth of the Son of God.

Today, as the angels rejoice in the heavens and the darkness of night that covers the earth is illuminated by the light of the Bethlehem star, let us turn our hearts and prayers to the Cave in Bethlehem so that we can receive the blessing from the Newborn Christ, the Saviour.

Let us open our heart to the Newborn Saviour so that He can be born in our heart and live within us.

Let the young child Jesus bless you and fill you with grace, calm, hope, and spiritual joy. Let Him strengthen you spiritually and physically and give you abundant strength to bear your earthly cross. Let us understand that from today we are not alone; we are not abandoned; we are not orphans. God is with us!

Once again, we greet you on the Great Feast of the Nativity of Christ and prayerfully wish that the Lord grants you a new year, 2018, filled with peace and blessings from Him.

Christ is born! Glorify Him!

With Archpastoral blessings,

†YURIJ, Metropolitan

Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada

†ANTONY, Metropolitan

Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA

**†JEREMIAH, Archbishop of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, South
America Eparchy**

†DANIEL, Archbishop

Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA

†ILARION, Bishop

Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada

†ANDRIY, Bishop

Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada