

**PASTORAL LETTER  
OF THE UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF CANADA  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD 2010**

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

*Our Saviour, the rising Sun, more brilliant than any other sun, has visited us today from on high. We once were in darkness and the shadow of error, but now we have found the truth; for the Virgin gives birth to the Lord our God in Bethlehem. [Exapostilarion for the Nativity]*

**Christ is Born!**

**Let us Praise Him!**

*During the autumn of 2010 the world followed with prayerful concern, fear and fascination the plight of the 33 miners in Chile. This group of workers, trapped deep within the dark earth, initially did not know if anyone even knew that they were still alive. After 69 days hope appeared. First a camera was lowered into their world. Then they sent a message scribbled on a piece of paper up to the surface. Slowly food and water were lowered to them, together with messages from their loved ones. Finally, by means of a miniature camera, the world above was able to watch the capsule that was lowered into their entombed world below. But it was only when a human figure stepped out of the capsule and into their world and into their lives that the miners could really feel their salvation was close at hand. And even then it was not a total certainty. They would still have to endure, one by one, the return trip back to the surface, a journey, which entailed many possible hazards.*

Dearly Beloved in Christ!

This year, as we celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ in Bethlehem some two thousand years ago, the events surrounding the miners in Chile can help us understand the significance of the birth of our Saviour and His entry into our world and into our lives. Before the coming of Christ, humanity lived in a world of darkness with little hope for salvation. Even as they strove to overcome all the challenges of life on earth, the people of this world could understand little of life after death. Only as Almighty God began to communicate with them, as we read in the Old Testament, did hope begin to enter their lives.

This hope took human form when Jesus was born in Bethlehem. When the Son of God took upon himself human nature with the flesh and blood of a man, the human race discovered salvation within their midst in a way that went far beyond the earlier expressions of hope from Old Testament times. As the first rescuer showed the way to freedom and salvation to the trapped miners by the example of his own descent, so too Jesus has shown by his example and his teachings our way to eternal salvation with his heavenly Father in eternity. But, like each of those miners, we too, one by one, must undertake our own hazardous journey to eternal salvation.

In the traditional icon of the Nativity of our Lord, we see that the Child Jesus is lying in front of the dark cave of a mountain. How similar this is to the darkness the miners of Chile endured within the earth before they were freed. When the miners then returned to the surface each of them had to wear

protective sunglasses to protect their eyes from the glare of the light that greeted them – a light they had lost during their stay deep within the earth. They were not unlike the three apostles who saw Christ transfigured in dazzling brightness. Indeed Christ is the light of our lives, a light that grows stronger the closer we come nearer to Him in our daily lives.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ!

We send you greetings on this feast of the Nativity of Christ, in the hope of the salvation He offers to all, and in recognition of the many hazards and difficulties you find on your earthly journey. We greet the elderly and the shut-ins, who due to physical limitations cannot live life to its fullest. We greet the sick and the weak, in their daily struggle to achieve good health. We greet those who for financial reasons live in doubt and uncertainty, searching for stable and secure homes. We greet the parents who strive to raise their children in a Christian manner in a world that ridicules their faith. We greet the young people who search for meaning and value to life, but are offered false hope and darkness by a selfish society. We greet the members of the armed forces who regularly put their life in danger for the common good. We greet our brothers and sisters in Ukraine, who continue to struggle for a strong and democratic country. We greet all the faithful of our Ukrainian Catholic Church, who strive to live out their faith lives and support our Church in times of change and uncertainty.

***May the light of Christ enlighten your life, bringing you the joy and peace that only true salvation can bring.***

- + Lawrence Huculak OSBM, Metropolitan Archbishop of Winnipeg
- + Michael Bzdel CSSR, Archbishop Emeritus of Winnipeg
- + Michael Wiwchar CSSR, Bishop Emeritus of Saskatoon
- + Severian Yakymyshyn OSBM, Bishop Emeritus of New Westminster
- + Cornelius Pasichny OSBM, Bishop Emeritus of Toronto
- + David Motiuk, Eparchial Bishop of Edmonton
- + Stephen Chmilar, Eparchial Bishop of Toronto
- + Ken Nowakowski, Eparchial Bishop of New Westminster
- + Bryan Bayda CSSR, Eparchial Bishop of Saskatoon