



**UKRAINIAN GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH**  
**SVIATOSLAV SHEVCHUK**  
MAJOR ARCHBISHOP OF KYIV-HALYCH

Prot. 18/438 ENG

Page 1 of 3

**CHRISTMAS PASTORAL LETTER**  
**OF HIS BEATITUDE SVIATOSLAV**

**Most Reverend Archbishops and Metropolitans,  
God-loving Bishops, Very Reverend Clergy, Venerable Monastics,  
Dearly Beloved Brothers and Sisters,  
in Ukraine and throughout the world**

*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder,  
and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:5)*

Christ is born! Glorify Him!

**Beloved in Christ!**

Today heaven and earth is filled with the light of joy and peace. Angels and men, all creation welcomes Christ the Saviour born in human flesh. All of us together with the shepherds and wise men hasten to the poor stable-cave to join Mary and Joseph in venerating the incarnate God, who rests on hay in a manger. We hasten to receive the love and peace that the Lord brings into a world of hate and violence.

The Gospel narrative of the Nativity conveys to us the Good News proclaimed by the angel: "And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger" (Luke 2:12). In the Christmas carols and services of this mystical night we hear of a mighty heavenly host praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!" (Luke 2:14). All of humanity, in awaiting the birth of the Saviour, had hoped for the beginning of a new era in human history – a new time when the Messiah as Prince of Peace would restore harmony to human relations, would abolish all forms of violence of men against men; not as a victor in war, like his ancestor David, but as the Son of God, conquering the very reason for wars and hostility – human sin, that evil which is the greatest disfigurement of paradisiacal happiness.

Human beings are created by God for peace which is a sign of the presence and action of the Holy Spirit (see Galatians 5:22-23). In spite of our nature, fallen through sin, human beings invariably seek this peace, even though we may not always know how to achieve it. For this very reason our Divine Liturgy, after calling for the establishment and strengthening of the blessed Kingdom of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, immediately invites us to pray for peace from on high for the entire world and the well-being of God's holy churches. Indeed, today's feast proclaims to us that Christ is the Prince of Peace and that the might of God is revealed in peace.

When we hear the word “prince,” we immediately think of a person who has authority and power. We encounter many “princes,” good and bad, in various spheres of human life: politics, employment, family, and even church life. However, from the Gospel perspective and in light of the example of Christ as Prince of Peace, it becomes evident that divine authority is expressed through service, and divine power is found in the infinite and unconditional, faithful, and sacrificial love of the Lord for His creation.

A human being can live in peace and become a servant of peace only when he or she receives the Prince of Peace, newly-born today, into their hearts, into their internal spiritual world, into their personal and social life. Saint Paul writes in his epistle to the Ephesians: “He is our peace” (Ephesians 2:14). Therefore, the greatest expression of God’s universal might, the manner in which the Prince of Peace manifests His power and authority, is not in the humiliation of others through injustice and violence, but in serving others out of unconditional love for the sake of peace!

At times in our daily lives it may seem to us that the one who is powerful is the one who is able to humiliate another. However, in reality such an expression of power is violence. Therefore, standing before the manger of the Prince of Peace, we begin to understand that violence is always the argument of a weakling, of one who wishes to appear powerful. It is the behaviour of a coward, who simply fears the other, no matter how weak.

Christ endured violence from the very moment of His birth. King Herod, whom history calls great, in reality was a little coward: he feared for his authority, he perceived himself a failure in the face of God as a powerless Child. In order to retain authority and the riches entailed in it, he resorted to violence: commanding the death of the little ones of Bethlehem, the children of his own people! The peace of God, on the other hand, is always mightier than human violence, and that is why He is always victorious.

Only the powerless and weak in spirit adopt a strategy of insidious attack, aggression, or blind violence as a method of ensuring one’s authority, being incapable of convincing or leading others any other way. In contrast, human frailty, vested in Divine power, often becomes the pledge of true victory and a lasting peace. Let us recall what the Lord revealed to the Apostle of the nations: “My power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9). The weakness of God is mightier than the appearance of human power. Herod was buried not long after the birth of our Lord Jesus, while Christ, the Prince of Peace, is alive – yesterday, today and forever! (see Hebrews 13:8).

Beloved in Christ! To celebrate Christmas is to be filled with peace from heaven and to say “no” to violence. Let us receive the newly-born Saviour as Prince of Peace in our families and become, following the example of St. Joseph and Mary the Theotokos, bearers and custodians of peace. Let us avoid all forms of violence – in word and deed – especially in our family circle, in relations between husband and wife or parents and children. Let us reject the culture of death which allows for the killing of the innocent unborn and, as we see in some countries of the world, encourages the gravely ill or elderly to shorten their life under the guise of a so-called “sweet death,” which is nothing more than an offense against God and a crime against the sanctity and inviolability of human life.

Let our ancient Christmas carols resound in our schools and educational institutions, safeguarding our children from events of violence. In societies where we live, let us not permit the presence of blind physical or moral violence on the political battleground. Representatives of political forces who encourage violence and foment conflicts are in reality spiritual weaklings, and they will never be capable of serving the common good of our people. Wherever we live, whether in Ukraine, which in the near future will be electing a president and parliament, or in the countries where our people have settled, let us support

those who aspire elected office not in order to rule others, but in order to serve. Let us support those who resist violence and seek to establish the peace of God, a peace that is just and lasting.

Let us celebrate Christ's Nativity today and bring forth the joy and peace that comes from heaven. Let us conquer violence and fear, both in our personal lives, and on all the fronts of this war, whose consequences profoundly affect each and every one of us. Let us counter foreign aggression, as do those who defend our native land in Ukraine's East, with the sacrifice of our love, in active solidarity with the victims of aggression. Let us be persistent in prayer, calling for the peace of God upon our land, in our families and hearts! May the words of the prophet Isaiah be fulfilled for us: "Violence shall no more be heard in your land, devastation or destruction within your borders; you shall call your walls Salvation, and your gates Praise" (Isaiah 60:18).

Beloved Brothers and Sisters! With this Christmas letter I greet all of you who today, as domestic Church, receive the new-born Christ into your families — parents and children, the elderly and youth. I hasten to share the good news of joy and peace with those, who labour abroad — far away from their home and loved-ones. I embrace those brothers and sisters who have been forced to migrate, who miss their native lands, and all, who today carry on their bodies and in their hearts the wounds of war and violence.

With the Nativity of Christ, I especially greet our soldiers, the defenders of peace and victors of war. My thoughts and prayers go to the cold prisons, where our prisoners of war and of conscience continue to suffer; to the hospitals, where our wounded in battle for our nation regain their health; to the homes, where Ukrainians afflicted with grief mourn the loss of their loved-ones because of the war. The Lord of peace is with us! May the Christmas star shine upon us with its light, and in every home the words of our carol-song resound clearly:

*Ангели співають: (The Angels sing:)*  
*«Слава» восклицаютъ, (Exclaiming "Glory!")*  
*На небесах і на землі (In heaven and on earth)*  
*Мир проповідують. (Proclaiming peace.)*

I wish all of you the authentic joy that is given to the children of God, a cheerful celebration of Christ's Nativity, and a happy, peaceful and blessed New Year!

Christ is born! Glorify Him!



Given in Kyiv

at the Patriarchal Cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ,  
on the day of our father St. Nicholas the Wonderworker, Archbishop of Myra in Lycia,  
the 19th (6<sup>th</sup>) of December in the 2018th Year of our Lord