



МОНРЕАЛЬСКАЯ И КАНАДСКАЯ ЕПАРХІЯ
РУССКОЙ ПРАВОСЛАВНОЙ ЦЕРКВИ ЗАГРАНИЦЕЙ

DIOCÈSE DE MONTRÉAL ET DU CANADA • L'ÉGLISE RUSSE ORTHODOXE HORS FRONTIÈRES
DIOCESE OF MONTREAL AND CANADA • RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE OF RUSSIA

ЕПАРХИАЛЬНАЯ КАНЦЕЛЯРИЯ
DIOCESAN CHANCELLERY

NATIVITY EPISTLE

To the clergy and all God-saved flock of the Diocese of Canada

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ!

This is already the second year while celebrating the grace-filled Feast of the Nativity of Christ we are surrounded not by the familiar atmosphere of peaceful life and joyous expectations that we remember from childhood, but by fears and concerns of the pandemic which was allowed for our sins. The word pandemic, that is, the universal invasion of a hitherto unknown dangerous disease, may have become one of the most widely used words in every language. And, along with the distress caused by the spread of the disease of the body, we can, together with our ever-memorable Metropolitan Anastasy (Gribanovsky), say: "These are days of some kind of general spiritual blindness... Everything is perverted in present-day society: thoughts, feelings, yearnings and ideals. The entire life, the entire spiritual culture has strayed off the right path." And yet the wise Vladyka Anastasy spoke these words over sixty years ago.

Mankind was in a state similar to that in the days before the Nativity according to the Flesh of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We remember, beloved brothers and sisters, how those whom He came to save from hell and death met the Christ Child. But it was God's will that the time of our salvation has come, and so the angel of the Lord, speaking to the "little flock", the shepherds of Bethlehem, has announced the "good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people, for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord... Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Lk. 2:10-11,14). As if trying to contest the ordained will of God, King Herod "sent forth and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under" (Mt. 2:16), but he could not prevail. Enmity, malice, envy, hatred, vanity, darkening of the moral sense and other machinations of the enemy – these have been trying, for more than two thousand years, to fulfill the order given by Herod, yet they are powerless before God's providence. This is the great Christmas miracle which is given to us not only to behold, but also to take part in it every year.

Today's feast we celebrate in perplexing times. The very course of our parish life and church service we are so used to is being disturbed from outside. Once again, circumstances prevent all of us, both clergy and laity, from celebrating and taking part in divine services as we always did, and which seemed to us as immutable as the passing of the seasons. But the whole course of human life on earth has now changed, just as it happened many times in

history. Yet the Miracle of Christmas shall not be disannulled to the ages of ages, for it is the Son of God Who "took upon Him the form of a servant" (Phil. 2:7) is coming down from heaven to earth for all mankind, so to raise us up to heaven, giving us life eternal. And this is indeed the aim of life on earth. I wish you the fullness of joy in your hearts when you and your families will celebrate the Nativity of Christ, the approaching Theophany, and, of course, the coming of the New Year, with faith and hope that the Newborn Christ the Savior will grant us health and salvation, and protect us from disease. Let us pray to the Divine Infant that the present afflictions may speedily pass us by.

CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Archbishop Gabriel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

GABRIEL
Archbishop of Montreal and Canada

Nativity of Christ, 2022