



## **2019 PASTORAL LETTER**

### **OF THE UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF CANADA**

#### **ON THE OCCASION OF THE FEAST OF THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD**

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

Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen!

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

One day during this past month of March, many of us opened the newspaper and saw a disturbing headline: "*City of Montreal to pull Crucifix from Council Chamber!*" The article was distributed by the official agency, *The Canadian Press*, and as such was seen across Canada. The article explained that the city council had decided that after 80 years, it was no longer desirable to have the crucifix hang in the chambers of the city hall. This, the article pointed out, was part of the movement of secularism in the province of Quebec.

This news item was disturbing on its own, but its impact was particularly felt as it came during the time of the Lenten Fast, when Christians around the world were preparing themselves to mark the crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Even though most city halls across Canada do not have a crucifix hanging on the wall, and likely never did, there was a certain comfort for Christians to know that in a province that had such a strong Catholic history, the respect and tradition of this important symbol of faith was still found in the heart of city life.

The crucifix, even in its simplest form, speaks eloquently of the great gift of Jesus, the Son of God for all humanity. It relays this message of salvation when it is worn around the neck. It relays this same message of salvation when it stands on the top of a church dome. It speaks not only of suffering and death, but at the same time of resurrection and eternal life.

In our churches we find a special place for the cross of Christ especially on Good Friday, near the symbolic grave that is set up in the heart of the church. The cross stands over the grave of Jesus and reminds us of his great sufferings.

On Easter Sunday morning we again find the empty cross in the heart of the church, as we celebrate the resurrection of Christ. It tells us not only of the triumph of Jesus over suffering and death, but of his glorious rising from the dead. And most importantly it reminds us of the Good News that we too are challenged to suffer and die with Jesus, so that we too will rise to eternal life after our death and burial.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The decision to have a crucifix in public places of our communities may not be a decision that will be up to us to make. However, each of us can make the decision to have a crucifix hang on the walls of our homes.

When people walk into our houses, what kind of homes do they find? What does the interior appearance of our homes say about the people who live there? They may see how well our homes are decorated and arranged, and compliment us on our taste. Or they may see dusty cupboards and dirty dishes, causing them to think poorly of our personal hygiene. But when people walk into our homes can they tell that they are in the home of a believer in Jesus Christ? Do they feel a sense of religious faith when they enter our homes, by the appearance of a crucifix, or holy icons, or other religious symbols?

As we prepare for these important days of Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday, let us not get caught up only in the decorations associated with these days, that include various figures of the holy cross. Rather, let us make sure we use the holy cross and other religious figures as symbols of our faith in Jesus Christ.

Strengthened by the cross of Jesus and his life-giving resurrection, we send these Paschal greetings to all our faithful in Canada, in Ukraine and throughout the world. We send these Paschal greetings to the sick and the elderly. We send these Paschal greetings to the marginalized and the forgotten. We send these Paschal greetings to those struggling with their faith, those living in doubt and fear. Live in hope, do not be afraid, for Christ is Risen!

*Come all you faithful, and let us bow to the holy resurrection of Christ, since through the cross, joy has come to all the world. Ever praising the Lord, let us extol his resurrection, since He, having endured the crucifixion, has destroyed Death by his death! [Paschal Matins]*

Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen!

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

+ Lawrence Huculak, OSBM, Metropolitan Archbishop of Winnipeg

+ 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

+ Michael Wiwchar, CSsR, Bishop Emeritus of Saskatoon

+ Severian Yakymyshyn, OSBM, Bishop Emeritus of New Westminster

24/31 March 2019, Third Sunday of Great Lent: The Veneration of the Cross