

## THE CHRISTMAS PASTORAL LETTER of His Eminence Mykola Cardinal Bychok

*«Come, O faithful, inspired by God, let us arise and behold  
the divine condescension from on high that is manifested to us in Bethlehem!...»  
(Sticherion, Sixth Hour on the Eve of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ)*

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

As we gather once more at the radiant manger of Bethlehem, I extend to each of you—families, children, young people, and all our faithful—the warm embrace of pastoral love and blessing. The Feast of the Nativity is God’s proclamation that light has entered the darkness, hope has entered human history, and love has taken a human face in Jesus Christ. Today, the Lord comes to dwell among us, not in majesty, but within the simplicity and warmth of a family. And so, this Christmas, I invite our entire Eparchy to contemplate the mystery of the Holy Family and to rediscover the sacred calling of our own families.

In recent years, the Synod of Bishops of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church has spoken repeatedly and clearly about the family as the “domestic church”—the first place where the faith is lived, the Gospel is taught, and the love of God becomes visible in daily life. Our Synodal Pastoral Plan describes the family as the “living cell of the Church and the place where vocations, virtues, and the Christian worldview are formed.” When a family prays, forgives, sacrifices, celebrates, and remains faithful in trials, it becomes a living icon of the communion of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

For this reason, I warmly encourage every family in our Eparchy—parents, children, grandparents, and loved ones—to come together to the Christmas Divine Liturgy. There is no more beautiful way to celebrate the Nativity than by standing side by side before the newborn Christ, receiving His peace, singing the ancient carols of our tradition, and allowing the grace of the Eucharist to renew the unity of your home. Coming to church as a family strengthens the bond between generations and roots our children in a living, joyful experience of faith that will guide them throughout their lives.

Christmas shows us that God chose to save the world not through power, but through a family. The eternal Word did not enter humanity in isolation; He came into the embrace of Mary and Joseph. In their trust, obedience, and courage, we see reflected the very qualities needed in our own homes today.

The Synod reminds us that the family is under great pressure—economic instability, social fragmentation, individualism, and the wounds of war have all left their mark. Many families today experience distance, loneliness, or exhaustion. Many parents carry burdens in silence. Many young people struggle to see a hopeful future. And yet, precisely into this reality, Christ is born. The light of His Nativity is not reserved for perfect households, but shines into the ordinary, imperfect, and sometimes painful places of life.

Dear parents, you are the first heralds of faith to your children. Your blessing, your patience, your daily example of prayer and love are among the most powerful gifts you can offer. Dear children and young people, you are not only the future of the Church—you are its radiant present, the joy of your families, and the hope of our communities. Dear grandparents, your wisdom, your stories, and your prayers are treasures that root our families in faith and identity.

And to those who feel their family is broken, distant, or scattered—know that the Church stands with you, prays for you, and walks beside you.

This Christmas, let every home in our Eparchy become, even in a small way, another Bethlehem: a place where Christ is welcomed, where peace is cherished, where forgiveness softens hearts, where the lonely are embraced, and where gratitude becomes the language of daily life. Let us renew the simple but powerful habits that strengthen our domestic churches—shared meals, shared prayer, the Sunday Divine Liturgy, acts of charity, and the courage to speak words of kindness.

As we celebrate the birth of the Prince of Peace, I ask all people of goodwill to join in fervent prayer for peace in Ukraine. Let us pray for the protection of innocent lives, the healing of families torn apart by conflict, and the triumph of justice over aggression. May our united prayer become a source of consolation for those who suffer and a light that guides all toward the path of reconciliation.

With grateful prayers for you and your loved ones,  
and with the blessing of the newborn Christ!

† MYKOLA  
CARDINAL BYCHOK, CSsR  
*Eparch of Melbourne*

*Given in Melbourne,  
at our Cathedral of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul,  
on the 16<sup>th</sup> day of December, in the Year of Our Lord 2025,  
The Holy Prophet Haggai; Leave-taking of the Immaculate Conception*