



ГАВРИИЛЪ
Архієпископъ Монреальскій и Канадскій
The Most Reverend Archbishop Gabriel
of Montreal and Canada

NATIVITY EPISTLE

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

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ!

“Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16), as Apostle Paul already testified near the dawn of Christianity in a letter to his beloved disciple Timothy. The Holy Gospel, describing the way this greatest event in the history of mankind – God manifesting Himself in the flesh – has come about, says that the Angel, announcing the Nativity of Christ to the Bethlehem shepherds, spoke thus: “I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people, for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord... Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men” (Lk. 2:10-11, 14). During solemn celebration of the Feast of the Nativity of Christ, the Holy Church keeps reminding us of the compassion and love of Him, Who came down from the unapproachable and Awesome Throne of His divine Glory and appeared on our sinful earth “for us men and for our salvation”.

The joy of the Nativity of Christ, that joy, which the Angels announced to all mankind, is that the Almighty Maker of all things appeared on earth, lived among men, freed us from sin, curse and death, and opened for us the gate to His Heavenly Kingdom, giving us eternal joy of being in God and with God. God’s peace is indeed His precious gift to each of us, despite all that we see around us on earth now. The Feast is coming – let every soul rejoice in these days!

Dear brothers and sisters! We are entering the historical one-hundredth year of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia. Its creation is related to a great historical tragedy, not only for Russia as a country, but for the entire Russian Orthodox civilisation. Hundreds of thousands of Russians found themselves outside Russia in those sorrowful days. Over 125 ships sailed from Crimea in late October 1919, and on 6/19 November came to anchor at the Constantinople harbour. The same day, aboard the ship *Grand Duke Alexandr Mikhailovich*, the Temporary Higher Church Administration in South-East Russia met for the first time since leaving the Motherland, and decided to extend its operation as a Church entity in exile. That’s how our Russian Church Abroad was born. Among participants was ever-memorable Metropolitan Anastasy (Gribanovsky), our second First Hierarch, the successor of Metropolitan Antony (Khrapovitsky). As Vladyka Anastasy said later, “The wider and further we are scattered by destiny in the immense expanses of the world, the stronger is our conviction that we are sent by Providence to the different and often the most distant ends of the earth not only in order to preserve the treasure of our Orthodox culture, but also to spread this seed everywhere”. By God’s will this has indeed happened: the Russian Church Abroad carried the Orthodox Faith throughout the world. All our Dioceses are preparing for the commemoration of this historic anniversary.

We hope that the Canadian Diocese, too, will find a fitting way to celebrate such an important event in the history of the Russian Church.

CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!

+ Archbishop Gabriel

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