

**2025 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!***

Let us recall a time in our lives when we longed to belong... A person visited Ukraine many years ago for the first time. When he returned to Canada, people asked, “what was it like?” With some difficulty, he struggled for words to describe what it meant to him and how it felt. He ended by saying that the trip completed him in a way he didn’t know he was incomplete—to visit the people and places of his heritage and cultural roots. He discovered that he belonged. Is there a moment in your life when you became aware that you ‘longed to belong’?

Each time we celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation, the sacrament of the Eucharist, indeed each time we celebrate Easter, we come just a bit closer to understanding this mystery of ‘longing to belong’. God fashioned us to belong in loving relationships, especially within the immeasurable, uninterrupted, and eternal Life of the Trinity. In a sense, death is the hopelessness of not belonging to God and never knowing His eternal friendship. However, the Resurrection is God’s free offering to us, a resurrection from this type of death, from the feeling of not belonging to God!

Yet, our fragile faith requires effort on our part. Distractions and temptations often lead us to doubt this profound truth. Where is the Body of Christ in the midst of the uncertainty in life that comes from greed, empty promises, political strife, natural disasters, imprisonment, loss of limbs, loss of peace of mind, war, and death? We are sometimes overwhelmed by loneliness and being incomplete.

Today, however, Jesus offers us the Body of Christ, the faithful, people in our families, parishes, and religious communities. The Holy Spirit chooses to dwell in each person. Despite many weaknesses, we are chosen by God to help one another reflect on this truth and experience it in tangible ways. Jesus Christ is Truth. The Body of Christ is Truth. And we are part of that Truth. That is where we belong. When do we feel this most deeply? We belong the most when we welcome others and remind them that they, too, belong to the Body of Christ, the Church. In truth, God created us with this deep desire to belong, a ‘longing to belong’. In Him, ‘we are completed in a way that perhaps we didn’t know we were incomplete’.

Our experience of the Risen Lord is a journey of discovering how we belong – with each confession and every time we receive the Eucharist, with every psalm and hymn that we sing. Every time I forgive someone from my heart, I relive and witness to the resurrection of Jesus. He said the greatest commandments in the Gospel are... “you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.” The second is this, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (MK 12:29-31 NRSV)

As members of the Body of Christ, may each of us humbly ask for the grace to continue to acknowledge the desire of every human heart, the desire to belong and to participate in the eternal Life of the Trinity. In this Body, the *Theotokos* is ‘our hope, our protection, our refuge, our comfort, and our joy’. During this Year of Jubilee of Hope, may we celebrate this awareness of everyone’s ‘longing to belong’. As members of the Body of Christ, may God bring hope to others through each of us, our families, and our communities.

Sincerely Yours in the Risen Lord!

+ Lawrence Huculak, OSBM, Metropolitan Archbishop of Winnipeg
+ David Motiuk, Eparchial Bishop of Edmonton
+ Bryan Bayda, CSsR, Eparchial Bishop of Toronto
+ Michael Kwiatkowski, Eparchial Bishop of New Westminster
+ Michael Smolinski, CSsR, Eparchial Bishop of Saskatoon
+ Andrij Rabyi, Auxiliary Bishop of Archeparchy of Winnipeg
+ Michael Wiwchar, CSsR, Bishop Emeritus of Saskatoon