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PASTORAL LETTER

On the First Anniversary of My Appointment as Apostolic Administrator

To the Reverend Clergy, Venerable Religious, and God-Loving Faithful of the Eparchy of Toronto and Eastern Canada

Glory to Jesus Christ!

It is now one full year since I woke to the surprising news of my appointment as Apostolic Administrator for the Eparchy of Toronto and Eastern Canada by the Holy Father. I accepted it with some reluctance for I was already quite happy as the Eparch of Saskatoon and was concerned that the added responsibility was beyond my capabilities. At the same time, I looked forward to this appointment, anticipating what God had in store for both Eparchies, given their different histories, accomplishments and challenges.

Relying on God's grace, I consulted Bishop Stephen who already accomplished a great deal over seventeen years, but more recently was hampered by his health. I began familiarizing myself with the chancery office of Canada's largest Eparchy, with over seventy clergy, numerous religious, a retreat centre, four residences for seniors, four schools for our children, in addition to other lay organizations, such as, the UCWLC, the UCBC and the Knights of Columbus and all of this amid a global pandemic. I am grateful for the warm welcome of many individuals and communities, too numerous to mention here, but truly acknowledged.

Over the last year, the Chancery office staff grew in number. Based on sound advice from my consultants and advisors, I made some appointments and hired people for key positions, including a Vicar-General (Fr. A. Onuferko), Chancellor (Fr. Z. Walnyckyj), Vice-Chancellor (Fr. V. Yanishevsky), Finance Officer (Mr. E. Shawchuk), Eparchial Archivist (Mr. O. Bych), Eparchial Coordinator of Care (*Presbytera* A. Hrywna), and Communication Director (Ms. M. Kiebalo). I have been able to rely on the good work of important bodies such as the College of Eparchial Consultants, the Presbyteral Council, the Financial Council, the Clergy Personnel Committee, and the Eparchial Advisory Committee for Safe Environment. Active ministries for Youth (hosting a national gathering UNITY 2021 for young adults July 2021), Catechesis, and a Family and Life office are part of our vision for the Eparchy. All of this coincides with the ending of our lease at 940 The East Mall in April 2021 and the relocation of our chancery office to 4 Bellwoods Ave., adjacent to the church of St. Nicholas.

Together with chancery staff, we are constructing a new website and updating our Eparchial Policies. The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB) has asked that all Dioceses and Eparchies implement a Safe Environment Policy and Covenant of Care in response to their 2016 document *Protecting Minors from Sexual Abuse – A call to the Catholic faithful in Canada for Healing, Reconciliation and Transformation*. The policy requires Safe Environment training for all clergy, employees, and volunteers in the Eparchy that work with vulnerable people. This on-line training will soon be available. The Standing Committee for Responsible Ministry of the CCCC B has also asked us to carry out an external third-party investigation of files as part of an operational audit, ensuring our compliance with the document.

We formed a committee to deal with COVID-19. Our Vicar-General and Chancellor worked tirelessly with the deans of the Eparchy to produce and keep updated a protocol for liturgical celebration under ever-changing restrictions as part of our commitment to keep both clergy and faithful safe. As we all know, many parishes struggle to meet their financial burdens during this pandemic. A special thanks goes out to those who have continued to support their parishes and contribute to fundraisings efforts. Your generosity remains essential for the ministry of our parishes and Eparchy.

We have a strong commitment regarding financial transparency and fiscal responsibility. A Property and Asset Committee and an Insurance Advisory Committee will report to the Financial Officer to ensure all property deeds and titles are clearly tracked and insured. But also, so that we not lose sight of our mission in the midst of administrative concerns, an Eparchial Pastoral Council will be formed, bringing together representatives from the clergy, religious, laity, and various eparchial offices involved in pastoral matters. As for our parishes, our plan is to move them onto a common financial bookkeeping



system using Quickbooks. We are taking steps to ensure that all parishes hold regular meetings of their Pastoral and Financial Councils, as well as Annual General Meetings.

This past year I have been blessed to make pastoral visits to 48 parishes on a number of different occasions; for regional sessions of the Eparchial Sobor, Divine Liturgies, *Molebens*, Vespers, Funerals, walk-throughs with a parish priest, or even just to stop and photograph the church and hall. I am grateful to those who were able to assist me with this. By my count, only six parish locations remain for me to visit, along with a few residences and schools. I likely would have visited all of them had I not been prevented from doing so because of COVID-19 restrictions. We are even looking to start a new mission in Moncton, NB.

Everywhere I have been I have had an opportunity to meet so many wonderful people. Our faithful are truly the lifeblood of our Eparchy. When our churches were seen as unsafe for gatherings owing to COVID, they understood the importance of their homes as domestic churches: everyone participating in making the home a place of worship, parents blessing Easter baskets and children taking leaderships roles in prayer, coming together for livestream services from their home parish. All these were beautiful expressions of Missionary Discipleship. Numerous volunteers currently make it safe for community worship in our churches. Thank you for your cooperation with our clergy, who have shown such dedication in this time of crisis. One of the blessings of the pandemic is that through social media we have developed new ways of working together and supporting one another. Although separated physically, we have actually become closer as a priestly brotherhood.

Our Eparchy remains part of the global Catholic community and the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC) in particular. I have represented our Eparchy in on-line meetings with the Patriarch, the North American Synod of the UGCC, the Canadian Metropolia, the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario (ACBO), and the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. I have met with the Provincial leadership of the Basilian Fathers, attended meetings of the Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky Institute Foundation (MASIF), and participated in a spectacular Young Adult global on-line gathering *Viter Na Dii*. I also participated in public prayers for the *Holodomor*, the 75th Anniversary of the Ukrainian Canadian Women's Council, and in pastoral meetings with catechists. I was privileged to preach the annual retreat at Holy Spirit Ukrainian Catholic Seminary in Edmonton, and the Lenten parish mission at Holy Eucharist parish (Toronto). The appreciation banquet for our Bishop-Emeritus Stephen Chmilar in March of 2020 was a particular moment of blessing for our Eparchy and for me personally.

We also experienced sad moments of loss together. We laid to eternal rest sub-deacon Bohdan Czuchnowsky, Rt. Rev. Mitrat Petro Iwachiw, Fr. Roman Lahola, Fr. Volodymyr Chvets, Sr. Mary Holowaty, SSMI, Taras Ciupka, the husband of former office manager Mary Ciupka, the parents of Fr. Michael Hayes, the brother of Fr. Terry Lozynsky, and, most recently, the mother of Fr. Andrew Onuferko. May they enjoy God's promise of eternal life in Christ. *Vichnaya Pamiat!*

I am grateful to all of you for your prayers and support. Indeed, your insights, candid advice, wisdom, and spiritual guidance are invaluable to me and to those responsible for our Vibrant Parishes. I am excited about the potential of the many talented faithful of the Eparchy of Toronto and Eastern Canada. God is with us! He is calling each of us "to be witnesses" as His Missionary Disciples. May we continue to support each other in that sacred calling. I commend you all to the protection of the most Holy Mother of God.

The grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

With prayers and blessings,

+ Most Rev. Bryan J. Bayda, CSsR

Apostolic Administrator of the Eparchy of Toronto and Eastern Canada