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**Pentecost Pastoral of the
Ukrainian Catholic Hierarchy of the U.S.A.
To our Clergy, Hieromonks and Brothers, Religious Sisters,
Seminarians, and Beloved Faithful**

Glory to Jesus Christ!

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ!

We greet you on the joyous feast of Pentecost, the birth of the Church, and the rebirth of nature. This year, Pentecost coincides with an apparent decline of the pandemic and a loosening of quarantine restrictions. We are enabled to celebrate the birth and renewal of the Church by again attending Divine services —if not today then, by God’s grace, tomorrow. Having conscientiously endured restrictions on interpersonal encounters and interactions we hope to be together in prayer and in the Descent of the Holy Spirit Who comes to us. Our hope is real, and it is being realized. Saying “Happy Birthday” to our Mother-Church, born out of the gift of the Holy Spirit, we are also privileged to observe how life returns to our houses of worship as they refill with people, our chants, incense, and candlelight.

At Pentecost the Father, through the Son, sends to us the Holy Spirit, “the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, everywhere present and filling all things.” In the Feast, we all share the joy of being together. We celebrate the Spirit of communion in the Divine Trinity, in the Church, and in the human race. Our God is three Persons in One, a triune community. Each one of us is created in God’s image and likeness to live in divine-like relationship and communion. Sent by the Father, through the action of the Holy Spirit in Mary, the Mother of God, the Son assumed our life and death. In His Resurrection we overcome all obstacles to encounter, reconciliation and union with God and all of God’s children. No COVID-, no isolation, no death, is stronger than the healing and uniting Spirit of God, “who renews the face of the earth” (Ps 104:30).

Together we pray for the disease to be defeated, for recovery of those struck by sickness or crushed by the death of loved ones, and for the eternal rest of all virus victims. On the Last Day, may they be resurrected by the power of the Holy Spirit to new and everlasting life (Ez 37: 1-14; 1 Cor 15).

We extend special words of recognition and gratitude to doctors, nurses, all hospital and medical personnel, first-responders and all civil services. We are inspired by your dedication and heroic self-sacrifice. Christ the Healer works through you to save lives, including ours. We are uplifted by the steadfast service of priests and the exemplary responsibility of the faithful. We thank our clergy and all the baptized for their creative responses to the challenges faced by our Church in the United States. “We give thanks to God always for you all, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Th 1:2-3).

We are inspired by the resolve and resourcefulness of teachers, small entrepreneurs and business leaders, grand-parents, and parents along with our beautiful children. All of us have been called to adjust our daily lives to unprecedented circumstances. The entire globe, together and all at once, has lived in consciousness of real danger. It was more than danger: there was death. We all know somebody who was taken away from us by COVID-19. Among our ten active and retired bishops in the US, Metropolitan Stephen Sulyk of blessed memory was infected and called to the Lord. Two others endured a grievous bout with the ubiquitous disease and, gratefully, survived. We express our condolences, solidarity in loss, and sense of pain to those who had no chance properly to say good-bye.

And yet, our fundamental and overriding sentiment is that of *hope*. We celebrated the Resurrection and the Ascension of the Lord with His body. We rejoice in the Holy Spirit who descends in a special way when life is hard to where it really hurts — to the core of human suffering and tragedy.

Seven decades ago, our brothers and sisters in Christ, members of our Church in Ukraine, were enduring death-dealing persecution: all our bishops had been killed or imprisoned, the religious and priests with their families had been deported to Siberia. For Stalin, God was dead, and Christians were to disappear in death also. In 1947, from a gulag prison camp, the head of our Church, Metropolitan Josyf Slipyj, wrote an amazing letter for the Feast of Pentecost to his faithful, in fact to all of us. A handwritten copy arrived in western Ukraine from Siberia and was found in 2003, more than a half-century later, in a capsule, cemented into a wall in the Studite monastery in Univ. This epistle is the voice of a true shepherd who shares the sufferings of his flock yet yearns to offer a word of hope. Hope in the Holy Spirit.

“Our hardships force us — exhausted, oppressed, and frightened — to bend our knee and pray for the Holy Spirit to strengthen the Church, to bring her out of this mournful state ... and to inspire in her a new supernatural vigor,” writes Metropolitan Josyf to the Church declared liquidated and non-existent by Soviet officials. The experience of the first-generation followers of Christ was being repeated, and the blessings they received were being multiplied. As St. Peter wrote to the persecuted: “But rejoice in so far as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you” (1 Pt 4:13–14).

Metropolitan Josyf’s epistle continues: “Only the Holy Spirit can show us the way out and bring us out of a storm our Church never endured before. He will teach us to discern God’s plans and ways, which short-sighted people cannot see. The Holy Spirit will teach us with his gifts of wisdom, reason, and knowledge of the fullness of truth.” How inspiring these words ring today to our communities, living through three months of danger, lockdown, and ongoing uncertainty!

The Confessor of the Faith writes not only about Divine hope but also about human progress. He dreams about prosperity, bountiful harvests, new inventions, and better communications networks. He all but foresees the Internet! This was not a message of a trapped, despondent gulag prisoner, but the prophecy of a visionary overcoming insurmountable hurdles with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Metropolitan Josyf was not writing to a large audience or big assemblies. He counsels to conceal his missive. With time, it may prove seminal. But it would not be printed in newspapers or posted on the Internet. At best it might be received in the intimate circles of clandestine monasteries or by tight-knit families in the underground domestic Church.

There was no chance that the correspondence would soon reach and bolster many. Yet in his hope he witnessed to the truth. “Martyr” means witness. Not knowing whether you will win or lose, live or die, you do and say the right thing, you share the truth—in the Holy Spirit.

The truth is that God is with us (Mt 28:20). He created the world and each and every one of us. God saved us from our sins and freed us from the shackles of death. He prepared us to be people of communion, unity, solidarity, mutual service because these are the qualities that the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit share. God shares with us his very life, His Son in His Ascension brought our body and our human nature to the life of the Holy Trinity. The Holy Spirit in His Descent brings to us the divine life of God Himself.

No contagion, catastrophe, regime, war, poverty or persecution can overcome the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of Hope. He led Metropolitan Josyf and our entire Church in the communist countries through the dark tunnel of torture, isolation, prohibition, and death. Our Church is alive. In 1900 it had a mere three eparchies limited to western Ukraine; today globally there are 36 eparchies and exarchates, including our four in the US. The story of Slipyj in the Spirit is emblematic. In 1963, miraculously, following an intervention of St. Pope John XXIII, the Metropolitan was released from the gulag after 18 years of confinement to attend the Second Session of Vatican Council II. The 71-year-old crippled living martyr not only survived. A few months later in Rome he founded the Ukrainian Catholic University. For the next 21 years from the free world he continued to give hope to the faithful in the Soviet bloc while visiting and galvanizing our Church in various countries, including ours, on various continents. Today, in the very place it was declared dead, our Church is vibrant—and it is becoming truly global. Our life is just beginning, because the Holy Spirit has come.

May His gifts — wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord (Is 11:2)— be with you! May the hope that our ancestors fostered in far more treacherous circumstances be our hope! May we be people of solidarity and service to each other as we nurture our communion with God and all His children!

Today, our mission is to share the gifts of the Holy Spirit with others. Let us be contemporary apostles of Christ, witnessing to God’s truth, and revealing God’s goodness in the world.

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit!

+Borys

Archbishop of Philadelphia for Ukrainians
Metropolitan of Ukrainian Catholics in the United States

+Paul

Eparch of Stamford

+Benedict

Eparch of St. Nicholas in Chicago

+Bohdan

Eparch of St. Josaphat in Parma

+Andriy

Auxiliary Bishop of Philadelphia

Pentecost 2020