



UKRAINIAN GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH
SVIATOSLAV SHEVCHUK
MAJOR ARCHBISHOP OF KYIV-HALYCH

Prot. N. 18/132 ENG

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PASTORAL LETTER
OF HIS BEATITUDE SVIATOSLAV
TO YOUTH ON PALM SUNDAY

Here I am, for you called me.

1 Sam 3:5

Beloved in Christ Youth in Ukraine and abroad!

Palm Sunday, the day of Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem, is traditionally in our Church an occasion to reach out to you with a special greeting and prayer. I value this occasion most highly, for I recognize that speaking to all of our youth—to all social groups, countries and cultures, uniting myself to you and constituting one great church family, is my privilege and responsibility.

Throughout this year, our Church in Ukraine and throughout the world is seeking to listen to our youth most attentively, in order to have an opportunity to speak to the whole Catholic Church in their name. In fact, in October, representatives of the Universal Church from many countries and continents will gather in Rome for a Papal Synod dedicated to the theme: "Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment." In the context of this general focus on young people in the world today, I call on you—carefree schoolchildren and overworked students; to you—happy and often tired parents of schoolchildren and students; to you—caring grandmothers and grandfathers; to you, who have come to church today; and to all of you who you are open to hear me out.

Explaining why the Church is focusing on young people and what this Synod means, Pope Francis said: "The aim [of the Church] is to accompany the young on their existential journey to maturity so that, through a process of discernment, they discover their plan for life and realize it with joy, opening up to the encounter with God and with human beings, and actively participating in the edification of the Church and of society."

Encounter is at the heart of Christ's life and teaching on earth. Carefully reading the New Testament, we see a whole "rosary" of encounters, a network of people and relations, a constant search of people for God and God's movement towards man.

The evangelists describe the earthly journey of Jesus Christ as a tireless movement towards Jerusalem, completed this very day, this festive day. The teaching of Christ, His works and gestures often are rejected by His contemporaries. Healing on the Sabbath? Speaking to publicans? Sharing a meal with sinners? Calling himself Son of God and remitting sins? All this seemed to represent a greater and greater challenge.

The majestic entry into Jerusalem became a challenge for all: for society, which grew accustomed to its role as a lawless, voiceless colony under the rule of the Roman emperor; for the religious establishment of Scribes and Pharisees, who claimed for themselves the right to speak on God's behalf, even as they drifted hopelessly far away from His Spirit; for the authorities, who accepted their marionette-like status and fell into corruption; for the people, who got used to living in fear. They were lost in the face of this crisis, in the face of this "challenge," whose name was Christ, and for whom the youth today sing "Hosanna" and proclaimed the King of Israel. Therefore, there was no solution other than that of turning away from Him, destroying Him, eliminating the threat to the status quo. They would not be deterred even by the fact that Christ was the One of whom the Law and prophets spoke.

During the entry of Jesus into the city, it was the youth that accept the challenge—recognize Christ as God, as the Messiah, who brings freedom, opens the door to a living encounter with the Lord God. This challenge becomes for the youth a vocation—to new relations with God—a vocation to Love, to an authentic and full Life.

Beloved young Ukrainians, are you ready today in your circumstances to respond to the challenge of a new life, a new future? Search for your creative response to what kind of a Christian you want to be in today's world. Through His entry into Jerusalem, Christ does not merely throw out a challenge—He calls upon each of us to follow Him. As it was two thousand years ago, the youth of today are called to respond to this appeal, and not merely to observe.

Allow me in the name of the Church to throw out to you a challenge—to be with God more frequently, to dedicate to Him more time and attention, to pray privately for longer periods, to delve more deeply into the Sacred Scriptures. Reflecting on the teachings of Christ, you will also hear much about action: He Himself was constantly on the move—between towns and people, and He calls on His followers, especially us, to an active faith and love of God and neighbor.

To be a Christian is action. It signifies following Christ, responding to His fundamental calling, share in His life, death, and resurrection. For the path of our Savior is the life story of every person of faith. "Take up your cross and follow me,"—Christ calls out to His disciples of all time. The world today frequently sees in these words only humility and suffering to be rejected, whereas it is unable to recognize power and victory in this appeal. Human nature has within it an aspiration for victory—to win, be it is children's play or in serious projects at an adult age. The Cross of our Lord is a symbol of the most majestic, most important victory in the history of mankind—the victory over sin and death. Jesus Christ calls on us to share the joy of such a victory.

Every person should ask themselves a basic question: how do I know to what it is that God is calling me? What am I to do in life to be happy? How do I apply the talents, abilities, and interests given to me? How do I put together the mosaic of feelings and sensibilities which the Lord has given me? What should I be? A doctor? A musician? A businessman? What should I do? Do missionary work at the ends of the earth? Defend my country armed with weapons? Be a volunteer in the East? How can I change my country? How do I make the world a better place? How do I live an authentic life? These and other questions too

numerous to count should be answered by the youth of today in Ukraine and the world over, a world ever-changing, more fleeting, with countless global possibilities, dangers, and problems. The world demands expecting answers, while God calls – He is the challenge that grants us our personal life vocation.

Christ calls but each person should discern this call, understand their role, fulfill their specific life purpose. Christ invites but a person's response is always personal.

Your vocation is also your response, Beloved Youth, to God's call. Failing to find this response is to waste a life, to live not your life, to plan a life but never taste its fulfillment. Christ appeals to each one of us with these words: "I came that [you] may have life and have it abundantly" (Jn 10:10). This, the primary calling, which the Lord God directs to us, is the vocation to a fullness of life, while its realization is an individual's response.

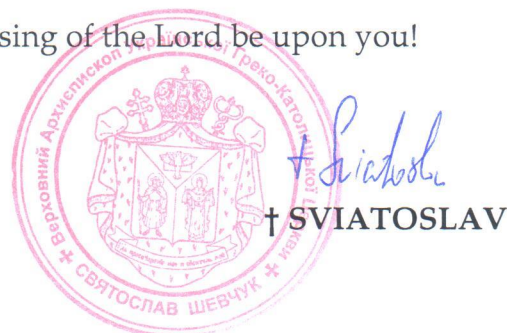
The task of the entire community of the Church – parents, teachings, mentors and educators – is to help a young person find his or her own response to God's calling, to discover in oneself their God-given talents, to discern one's vocation, written in the soul.

Discerning a vocation requires its discovery, interpretation, and choice. Without choice, that is, action, even the greatest vocation, the boldest dream, the brightest life is not possible. And choice requires courage – to respond to a call, to not fear deep waters, unpassable mountains or unknown paths, that is, difficulties, misunderstandings, and obstacles. This particularly applies to a unique vocation, which the world today drowns out, to the priestly or monastic state, as well as to the vocation to be a good father or mother.

Beloved girls and boys, have courage to respond to the challenge – to fulfill your God-given vocation! Dare to respond to the calling of Christ! Be yourselves! When you will understand, open up and develop your vocation, do not be afraid to stand on this path. Take responsibility upon yourselves! It is not by chance that the word "response" has the same root as "responsibility": one cannot be quietly and inactively responsible. Trust in God, who first has trusted in you, has first loved you.

Today Christ solemnly enters into Jerusalem to fulfill His vocation to die for us so that we might have eternal life. In searching for your response, your vocation, allow Him to be close to you!

The blessing of the Lord be upon you!



Given in Kyiv

at the Patriarchal Cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ,
on Akathist Saturday, March 24, 2018 A.D.

We instruct the clergy to read this Pastoral Letter to the faithful after every Divine Liturgy on Palm Sunday.