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No. 599/2016 O

This Number Should be Prefixed to Your Reply

Office of the Metropolitan

PYLYPIVKA (ADVENT) PASTORAL OF THE UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC HIERARCHY OF THE U. S. A.

**TO OUR CLERGY, HIEROMONKS AND BROTHERS, RELIGIOUS SISTERS, SEMINARIANS
AND BELOVED FAITHFUL**

Praise be Jesus Christ!

TIME TO REFLECT ON WHY WE ARE HERE IN THIS WORLD

With the commemoration of St. Philip on November 14th (Gregorian Calendar) or November 27th (Julian Calendar), we begin the customary fast or preparation for the Feast of the Nativity of the Birth of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. It coincides with the hectic season of pre-Christmas preparations, shopping for gifts for others, and invitations to participate in many social festive events. It truly becomes a challenge for us to withdraw ourselves from our earthly appetites, as we attempt to facilitate more time for prayer and meditation. When we become overwhelmed by such preparations, many of us step back and wonder whether all these things really add to our happiness and our feelings of contentment. We reflect on why we are here in this world.

Pope Francis, in the Apostolic Exhortation, "Joy of the Gospel", says that you and I are "a mission on this earth", and that is the reason why you and I are here in this world. We are called to live as missionaries who feel genuine happiness in seeking the good of others, in desiring their happiness. It is who we are. The Holy Father calls us to draw nearer to others and to seek their welfare. In turn, our hearts are opened wide to the Lord's greatest and most beautiful gifts. "Whenever our eyes are opened to acknowledge the other, we grow in the light of faith and knowledge of God".

The recent beatification of Saint Teresa of Calcutta reminds us of a life dedicated "to give until it hurts". Mother Teresa gave of herself until it hurt, as she continued to give of her understanding, compassion, care and devotion. She revealed to us that every person is worthy of our giving. Pope Francis reminds us that "every human being is the object of God's infinite tenderness, and He himself is present in their lives. Every person is immensely holy and deserves our love". Why are you here in this world? Pope Francis tells us so beautifully,

that “if I can help at least one person to have a better life, that already justifies the offering of my life. We achieve fulfillment when we break down walls and our heart is filled with faces and names!”

Herein lies our challenge during “Pylypivka” or Advent. Be still, calm yourself and hear the voice of Jesus in your life in prayer and meditation. Go about your daily life energized with the closeness of the Lord in your heart. Let Jesus be the source of your energy and that which you need for daily life. Choose to draw nearer to others seeking their betterment in small ways. Open your eyes to be become more aware of others and their challenges in life. Listen. Observe. Share of yourself in increased attentiveness to others. Share from your abundance. Pope Francis observes that “we do not live better when we flee, hide, refuse to share, stop giving and lock ourselves up in our own comforts. Such a life is nothing less than slow suicide”.

You will come to know that “it is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). You will be able to “give until it hurts” because it will not hurt. Jesus will not ask more of you than you can handle. You will do it with His joy and peace overtaking you. And, you will have come to understand why you are here in this world as you prepare to celebrate the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

God bless you in ways only He can as you journey through “Pylypivka” or Advent in anticipation of the birth of Jesus in the cave at Bethlehem.

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November, 2016