

St. Josaphat Ukrainian Catholic Church

Rochester, New York

September 24-25, 2011

C.I.X.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

It is with a heart filled with deep love and gratitude I write to you today. St. Paul the Apostle wrote to his “parishioners” at Corinth the following:

“You are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by all,  
shown to be a letter of Christ administered by us, written not in  
ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone  
but on tablets that are hearts of flesh” (2 Corinthians 3:2-3).

For the past nine years the Lord God in His great and mysterious Providence has brought us together. And we together have been writing the Holy Gospel of Good News. Together we have celebrated the life of our gracious Lord and His Holy Mother through the Feast days of the Holy Church. Together we have tried to grow in our faith and implored the myriads of saints, i.e., those already perfected “in Christ” to aid us in our earthly sojourn. We have been writing a “love letter” to our Lord God in the Most Holy Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit as a response to His presence amongst and within each of us.

Today I want to thank all those who attended ever so faithfully each and every Divine Liturgy and every other liturgical service celebrated in our church. You have built up the Church of Christ by your prayers. You have been the mortar which holds the Church together. You have been the quiet instruments of divine love.

There will be a special place in my heart for Alexander & Ryan Ehot (First baptized in 2002 sons of Philip and Renee Ehot) plus 108 and Anthony Piccioli (Last baptized in 2011 son of Joseph and Amanda Piccioli) these 111 who I was graced to be our Lord’s humble instrument in bringing them into the “fullness of Christ” through their celebration of the Holy Mysteries of Illumination, i.e., Holy Baptism (incorporation into Christ), Holy Chrismation (“Sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit”), and, Holy Eucharist (partaking of the very Body and Blood of our

Lord Jesus Christ). This is the greatest joy for every priest and I thank our Lord for permitting me to be His instrument of life.

“We do not preach ourselves but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your slaves for the sake of Jesus. For God who said, “Let the light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to bring to light the knowledge of the glory of God on the face of Jesus Christ. But we hold this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing power may be of God and not from us” (2Corinthians 4:5-7).

Each of us is created in the “image and likeness” of God (Genesis 1:27). Such is our dignity as human beings. Each of us, baptized into Christ Jesus have become the “icon of the Icon of God” (2Cor.4:4). We reflect and live the very life of Jesus Christ today. This is the gracious gift of our God for each of us. How beautiful! How glorious! How humbling! Divine Light shines within us!

Finally, permit me to ask your forgiveness for any of my sins and offenses I may have committed against any parishioner. This “earthen vessel” is quite aware of his sinfulness and short-comings. If they have been manifest and have caused pain, hurt or sorrow to anyone, please forgive me. My life as a priest is never to destroy but to build up “in Christ”. If I have contributed in any way to destruction please forgive me and pray the Lord’s compassion and mercy for me.

One final request: please love Father Philip even more than you have loved me. Your tremendous love for me was quite evident these past nine years. Many times I was overwhelmed and deeply moved by many of you. I hope you will remember me with joy, rejoicing that the Lord God brought us together for these many years. Remember the beauty of the Divine Services, the words of heart-felt love and challenge, the gentle expressions of love and respect. May our Lord continue to fill each of us with His love.

I will remember each of you in my daily prayers. May the Lord God remain with you always.

Yours in Christ

Fr. Kiril