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**“ONLY ONE THING WILL REMAIN YOURS – THAT WHICH YOU
HAVE GIVEN TO THE POOR”**

**Pastoral Letter of the Synod of Bishops
of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church of 2020
to the clergy, religious, and laity**

**Very Reverend and Reverend Fathers!
Venerable Brothers and Sisters in Religious Life!
Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ!**

I. “The poor you always have with you” (Jn 12:8): the faces and dimensions of poverty around us

1. With the present Pastoral Letter of the Synod of Bishops of the UGCC, we, your Pastors, wish to direct our gaze, together with you, on the suffering poor person, whose silent cry often fails to reach the ears and hearts of our contemporaries. The poor, however, have a special place in the heart of a loving God, the Heavenly Father, who saves the poor man and raises him up, who grants happiness to the sorrowful (see Ps 5:11,15), and calls to us in the words of the prophet Isaiah: “to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke, to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh” (Is 58:6-7).

In order that we may not turn away our hearts to a brother and sister, who suffers in our midst, following the example of the merciful Samaritan, we wish to pause before human misfortune and lean down towards it in a gesture of merciful and compassionate love, which our Lord pours into our souls by His Spirit (see Romans 5:5).

2. In his message for the first annual World Day of the Poor, announced at the close of the Jubilee Year of Divine Mercy (2015-2016), the Holy Father, Pope Francis, drew our attention towards the many manifestations or “faces” of poverty present in the current world – an open list of pain and suffering that from the ages until today is present in the

specific and painful experience of every nation, every family, and every person, and in which we recognize and add our own numerous deprivation and hurt:

- the poverty of those who endure suffering – physical, moral, or psychological;
- the poverty of the marginalized, lonely, rejected, and ignored in society;
- the poverty of victims of abuse by those with authority and influence;
- the poverty of those who are exploited for profit, trampled on by the distorted logic of power and money;
- the poverty of those doomed to exile, persecution and torture, of the incarcerated;
- the poverty of victims of war, conflicts, terrorism;
- the poverty of those who are deprived of freedom, rights, and dignity
- the poverty of illiteracy and lack of education, which holds in darkness millions of young minds and souls;
- the poverty of intellect and culture that proposes tabloid substitutes instead of raising a person to spiritual heights;
- the poverty of spirit, closed to Divine reality, deprived of the light of faith and the knowledge of Christ, the Savior;
- the moral poverty of those immersed in sins and held captive to disordered desires;
- the poverty of the unemployed, deprived of medical and basic social care;
- the poverty of refugees, migrants, migrant workers, the homeless, and others.

“What a bitter and endless list we would have to compile were we to add the poverty born of social injustice, moral degeneration, the greed of a chosen few, and generalized indifference!” This is how the Pope sums up his view on poverty in the world, while at the same time inviting us to recognize in the faces of the poor of this world the presence of Christ, so that we might lean down towards them and stretch out our hand in sympathy and help, in order to pour out on the wounds of humankind the oil of comfort and merciful love.

II. “I feel compassion for the multitude” (Mt 15:32): the challenge of material poverty in today’s world

3. Having seen the material need of the people who were with Him in the desert, Christ in His Divine heart was moved to compassion for them. He appealed to the apostles that they might find food for these poor souls.

Material poverty is noticed by all who have a sincere heart and open eyes. All we have to do is look beyond the dry and faceless analysis of fresh statistical data, and understand that behind every numeric figure there is a concrete human story, a human being, oppressed, deprived of dignity, whose rights, possibilities, and freedoms are trampled.

International humanitarian organizations inform us that today in the world almost a billion people live in circumstances of dire impoverishment, having for their daily life and sustenance less than two American dollars, even though in the US itself there are many jobless and poor who work. When one part of humanity reaches cosmic expanses with their technologies or spends billions on deadly weapons, the other, which includes almost 800

million people—close to 10 percent of the world population!—are victims to chronic malnutrition and death by hunger. Even more, in many developed countries each day, hundreds of thousands of tons of food are thrown away, food which could save the lives of those who hunger. Along with discarded food, living human beings and lives are thrown away into the trash bins of history and the margins of human society.

4. And in Ukraine the situation is not much better. Eight out of ten pensioners live below the poverty line. Also, ever more frequently we receive signals that in the near future pension funds will be difficult to maintain. According to a number of studies, from 24 to 45 percent of our nation's citizens will not be able to provide for their elementary basic needs. In spite of some increase in salaries, in Ukraine we observe such a phenomenon as the poverty of the employed. Experts note that the salary of every third worker is insufficient to meet basic needs for life, and every second employable person works two jobs. Many of our families are impacted by the absence of adequate social security for invalids or our low-income fellow citizens.

Even though we have received from God immense, natural, economical, and human potential, because of continued weak policies of government leaders and inconsistency in reforms, that potential remains unrealized. The crisis in Ukraine, as a result of Russian aggression in the East, together with new challenges associated with the pandemic, make the lives of millions of Ukrainians utterly troubling and unbearable. Millions of migrant workers, mass unemployment, lack of social security—these are manifestations of the striking poverty in our Fatherland, a “rich country of poor people” as someone has noted with bitter irony.

5. Desiring to better the situation, we must begin by addressing basic needs, in particular in regards to overcoming hunger in our midst. From the depth of the centuries, the voice of St. Volodymyr the Great resounds in our ears, stirring the conscience in regards to those who die of hunger: “The disease of the poor — hunger, which is such a great form of suffering that it cannot but summon compassion. The worst of all human misfortunes is hunger, and death from hunger is the worst of all deaths. Other dangers or the edge of the sword bring a quick death... But hunger is a slow evil, a prolonged torment. Death which, lurking, has hidden itself within, in every instant threatens and withdraws” (*Homily*, delivered in a time of hunger and drought). And then the saint gives release to his anger, seeing the insensitivity of the surroundings to this inhumane anguish and suffering: “What punishment does one deserve, who is capable of carelessly bypassing a person with an emaciated body? Is a greater cruelty even possible? Is not such a person deserving of being considered a ferocious animal, of being recognized as a thief and murderer? A person who has the opportunity to heal, to correct a wrong, but willfully and out of greediness rejects this, should rightfully be judged together with killers” (*idem.*).

Millions among us even today live in the shadow of such slow hungry dying — silent, deprived of dignity, attention, compassion, assistance, and understanding. Their affliction, muffled by our insensitivity and inaction, cries out all the louder and becomes ever more insufferable. Indeed, indifference kills!

6. We, Ukrainians, know well what famine and death from hunger means, and also how bitter it is to die alone before the eyes of an indifferent world, focused on itself. The memory

of the horrors of the Holodomors are fixed in our national consciousness forever. However, this memory places on us a responsibility, not only before the dead, but also before our contemporaries, who today before the eyes of the entire world are doomed to torments and suffering similar to those experienced by our brothers and sisters nearly a century ago. Possibly our nation, having undergone such horrible ordeals, has a special mission from God, and a task to awaken the conscience of humanity and individuals, that they might take note of the despicable phenomenon of hunger in the world, and do everything to eliminate these sufferings of our weak and unprotected brothers and sisters, becoming their voice and stretching forth to them a helping hand of solidarity. And just as the long-suffering Jewish people, having lived through the horror of the Holocaust, became a bulwark for a sinful humanity against the repetition of similar crimes, so also our people, having had the experience of annihilation by hunger, should serve in the world as a voice of conscience, that calls for the salvation of the undernourished and hungry, and advocates for effective action towards eliminating the affliction of hunger from the face of the earth. This must become the consolidated and persistent action of us all—the state, the citizenry, the Churches, of each and every Ukrainian, for whom our history, the fate of our country and the memory of those who died are sacred. And this would be our best memorial tribute to the millions of victims of the Holodomors, and our active contribution towards the transfiguration of contemporary humanity: “Remembering the Holodomor – we save from hunger today!”

III. “Instruct those who are rich in the present world” (1 Tim 6:17): an appeal to the conscience for compassion and solidarity with the poor

7. The Lord God, Creator and Granter of every good in this world, does not judge riches, as He is the Source and Pledge of good for all His children. For this reason, the Holy Father, Pope Francis, rightly observes in his latest encyclical, *All Brothers*, “The bigger risk does not come from specific objects, material realities or institutions, but from the way that they are used” (par. 166). A distorted understanding of the value of material things, in the words of the Pope, is rooted in human nature, wounded by sin, and most susceptible to that which Christian tradition calls “concupiscence” or “greed.” It has to do with human weakness, the proclivity to selfishness that is part of what the Christian tradition refers to as “concupiscence” or “greediness.” “The human inclination to be concerned only with myself, my group, my own petty interests. Concupiscence is not a flaw limited to our own day,” notes the Encyclical’s author, “it has been present from the beginning of humanity, and has simply changed and taken on different forms down the ages, using whatever means each moment of history can provide” (*idem.*).

8. When every day it is common to see the wealthy and government officials driving around on the streets of Ukrainian cities in their luxurious vehicles (truth be told, the same can be seen in many other corners of the globe), while on those same streets their fellow citizens sift through trash bins, we call to mind the eloquent teaching of St. Basil the Great, written many centuries ago: “By a certain wily artifice of the devil, countless pretexts of expenditure are proposed to the rich, so that they strive for superfluous, useless things as though they were necessary, and so that nothing measures up to their conception of what they should spend... Since, then, the wealth still overflows, it gets buried underground,

stashed away in secret places [Today we would certainly say: in offshore accounts – *Aut.*], for (they say), ‘what’s to come is uncertain, we may face unexpected needs’” (*Sermon to the Rich*, 2-3)

9. In this, the Word of God and the Teachers of the Church note the danger associated with wealth. In particular, in the above-mentioned work we read the following: “When wealth is dispersed, in the way the Lord advises, it naturally stays put; but when held back it is transferred to another” (*idem.*). Naturally, the Lord does not instruct us to waste accumulated means on luxuries for ourselves, as the rich man did in the parable on poor Lazarus, who “was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day” (Lk 16:19), or the foolish man of wealth, who, having gathered an abundant harvest, said to himself: “Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry!” (Lk 12:19).

10. Goods, riches, savings – if they are used skillfully and wisely – should bring benefit not only to ourselves, but also for our neighbors, and should be transformed in the hands of responsible officials into workshops of a creative love that transfigures the world. On the other hand, insensitivity of the conscience to the true value of material goods and to the cry of the destitute lies at the foundation of crises and upheavals that torment the human race from time immemorial to the present day, inflicting suffering on millions and imperiling with eternal danger those who are blinded by wealth and money. Thus, again we must recognize that “among the most important causes of the crises of the modern world are a desensitized human conscience, a distancing from religious values and the prevailing individualism accompanied by materialistic philosophies that deify the human person and introduce worldly and material values in place of supreme and transcendental principles” (*All Brothers*, 275).

11. In calling the wealthy to a change of heart before the face of the Almighty, to solidarity with and compassion for the poor, we wish to be the voice of God, who speaks to their conscience for their own salvation and good. Indeed, according to the apt observation of St. Clement of Alexandria, “Those who bestow laudatory addresses on the rich appear to me to be rightly judged not only flatterers and base... but also godless and treacherous; godless, because neglecting to praise and glorify God, who is alone perfect and good... they invest with divine honors men... liable on this account to the judgment of God; and treacherous, because, although wealth is of itself sufficient to puff up and corrupt the souls of its possessors, and to turn them from the path by which salvation is to be attained. They stupefy them still more, by inflating the minds of the rich with the pleasures of extravagant praises, and by making them utterly despise all things except wealth...” (*Who is the Rich Man That Shall Be Saved*, 1).

Therefore, not desiring to be judged together with the wealthy, but caring for their good in this life and their eternal salvation, we call out and say to them: do not rely on riches, that evil might not catch you unawares and without recourse! Rather, as wise stewards, direct the means that you have in your hands so that they might save the poor, protect the weak, and support the unfortunate. And then your souls will shine with the warmth of love, truth, and good, and you will receive the kind of blessing, peace, and joy, that no money can buy or guarantee.

12. The state, naturally, has the primary responsibility for improving the economic situation and the job market. Thus, we call on the state leaders of Ukraine and other countries, where our people have settled, to adopt decisive and consistent measures that would secure for their citizens, immigrants, and laborers access to work with a proper salary, adequate social protection and care, especially for the weakest and most vulnerable. To withhold pay earned by workers is inadmissible, and such that calls for vengeance from heaven, as is an unjust wage and the absence of social protections for workers. Experts rightly note that as long as the shameful situation of poverty among the working population exists, it will not be possible to overcome the poverty of pensioners.

13. Instead of various forms of subsidies or occasional handouts from the rich, the social good would be better served by the introduction of the kind of approaches and methods of conducting business that place at their center the human person, his or her dignity, freedom, and rights. A socially conscious business model should liberate employers and economic structures from the captivity of blind market rules, under which people often die, the rights of simple workers are trampled, the future of the elderly is nullified, and the hopes of the young are dashed.

14. We fully understand and support the words of the renowned Catholic preacher, Fulton Sheen, who noted that “the poison of hate, sensuality, and envy which is in the hearts of men” cannot be healed “simply by wise exhortations and social reforms” (from *Life of Christ*). What is of absolute necessity is “a change of heart, attitudes and lifestyles” (*All Brothers*, 166). We pray for such a change of heart, we ourselves aspire to walk along the path of such change, and we invite all people of good will to join us.

IV. “Blessed are the poor in spirit” (Mt 5:3): bearing witness to evangelical poverty

15. All people, created in the image and likeness of God, are called to the mentioned change of heart, but especially those who have been made worthy of encountering the living God in Christ incarnate. Pope Francis in his Message on the occasion of the First Annual World Day of the Poor reminds us that “for Christ’s disciples, poverty is above all a *call to follow Jesus in His own poverty*. It means walking behind Him and beside Him, a journey that leads to the beatitude of the Kingdom of heaven (cf. *Mt 5:3; Lk 6:20*). Poverty means having a humble heart that accepts our creaturely limitations and sinfulness and thus enables us to overcome the temptation to feel omnipotent and immortal. Poverty is an interior attitude that avoids looking upon money, career and luxury as our goal in life and the condition for our happiness.”

16. That our journeying with the poor Christ on the road of the Beatitudes may be for others credible and inviting, surely, we must rely on witnessing, and not limit ourselves to verbal declarations. It should also be emphasized that a convincing witness does not depend simply on the conformity of our words with our actions. A true “witness of the Invisible” always directs another person to God, leading to their personal encounter with Him. From the distant year of 1974 resounds the prophetic word of Pope St. Paul VI, applicable also today: “Contemporary man listens to witnesses more readily than teachers or, if he listens to teachers, it is because they are witnesses. He effectively reveals an instinctive aversion to all that could appear as deceit, facade, compromise. In this context one understands the

importance of a life that truly resonates with the Gospel!" (Message during an audience with the Pontifical Council for the Laity, October 2, 1974).

In practice, this means that all of us, as disciples of Christ, are first called to proclaim the beatitudes of the poor, which is the cornerstone of Christ's teaching, in order to demonstrate, on the one hand, how close God is to every suffering person, and on the other, to reveal to the world a new way, transfigured in the Spirit of Christ, to treat material goods which the Lord has placed into our human hands, so that they become instruments of love, mercy, and brotherhood.

17. Christians, gazing at the eternal goods to come, see in temporary things a precious gift from God and, at the same time, a means for service. "Temporary goods in the eyes of Christians do not have a limitless value," noted in his time the venerable Andrey Sheptytsky, "they are the means to achieve something higher and eternal. In this world man is on a journey. His citizenship is in heaven" (*On Social Questions*). It is important that we not forget this and take direction in evangelical wisdom which teaches: "Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs. But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness" (1 Tim 6:6-11).

18. Our Lord Jesus, as the merciful God and Creator of humankind, directs His salvific steps and saving word first of all to the poor. While delivering His "position sermon" in the synagogue of Nazareth, He makes use of the words of the Old Testament prophet Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor" (Lk 4:18). Filled with the Spirit of mercy, Jesus felt grief and profound pain in the face of human poverty, hunger, and suffering. Thus, all who have been made worthy of becoming a temple of the Holy Spirit, inevitably will experience in their heart the same feelings, that were also in His divine heart: compassion, mercy, participation, solidarity.

Today the Supreme Pontiff, Pope Francis, calls the whole Church to "speak through the testimony of poverty" and he explains what this should mean in practice: "If a believer speaks about poverty and leads the life of a pharaoh—that will not do. This is the first temptation. Another temptation is making agreements with governments. Certainly, agreements can be made, but they must be clear agreements, transparent agreements... Because the temptation for corruption is always present in public life. Both political and religious" (Interview with Netherlands newspaper, *Stratnieuw*s, November 2015.)

19. Thus, in a situation where contemporary humanity suffers from such a multitude of trauma, wounds, poverty, and lack of the barest necessities, we, Christians, must frequently say to ourselves in the name of fidelity to the Gospel and solidarity with the poor: this is unbecomingly! It is unbecomingly to live "above status," that is, beyond the means of our situation, accumulating an abundance of reserve resources, instead of sharing with the needy, even with what little we receive today from the Lord; it is unbecomingly to build extravagant villas

and palaces, monuments to vanity and signs of ill-acquired luxuries; it is unbecoming to travel in expensive luxury vehicles to quell our morbid ambitions and pursue fleeting status; it is unbecoming to treat the environment so predaciously, littering with rubbish our God-given natural world, destroying our common home for this and future generations; it is unbecoming to close our eyes to the destitution in our midst and construct walls of indifference and callousness around our own lives, our families, communities, parishes. No, for Christians such behavior is entirely unbecoming!

20. Within the church community, there are Christians who, prompted by the Holy Spirit, seek to bear a particular witness before the world to detachment from material things and acceptance of a simple, poor, evangelical way of life. We call these people religious or monastics, who consciously renounce material goods, in order to follow Christ in poverty, humility, and chastity. We thank them for their witness, we value their dedication to serving their neighbors – women, children and the youth, the sick, the elderly, prisoners and our military with their families, but at the same time we caution them against the temptation of excessively worrying about material things and, what is even more dangerous, doing this at the expense of fostering a sincere life in evangelical love, simplicity, and compassion for those in need.

21. “I so desire a poor Church for the poor!” – Pope Francis frequently says. Our desire, too, is to bear witness to evangelical poverty, so that every monastery in our Church may shine with simplicity and modesty, openness to the poor and a close solidarity to them. Also, in every parish community and in our personal family lives we are all called to be frugal, full of compassion for the needy and of mercy for the destitute. Let us remember that in the community and family, where love and mercy is not an abstract concept, but a new way of being Christian, there healthy children will grow, a youth that is conscious of its Christian identity will mature, adults and the elderly will be protected and surrounded by due respect and care, and on all will descend blessing from heaven.

V. “I am among you as the one who serves” (Lk 22:27): to be a Church that goes out to serve the poor

22. However, Christian righteousness does not and cannot consist solely in asceticism, in escape from temptation, in avoidance of sin and luxury, greed and avarice. Christ, inviting the rich youth onto the path of salvation, appealed to him to not only renounce vain wealth, but to go further in the pursuit of life by selling all he had and giving it to the poor. In other words, Jesus wanted to heal the youth from an egoism that makes one blind, from a self-sufficiency that makes one insensitive to the presence of the poor, from a captivity of wealth that provides brief satisfaction, but deprives one’s life of deeper meaning and authentic beauty. For a person of faith, true wisdom is this – to make riches into a masterful instrument of love towards one’s neighbor and a means for one’s own salvation.

The righteous Metropolitan Andrey, being a person of significant means, possessed precisely this kind of wisdom, having placed his properties and resources at the service of love and the common good. Because of this he could calmly and with conviction of spirit speak to the faithful of the Church, to the poor and the rich: “In the pursuit of wealth Christ cautions us about only one thing, that people not value possessions more than God, than conscience, than eternal life; that we not exchange God’s gifts for injury to ourselves: for it

would be a great injury for a person, a real evil, if because of possessions one person would wrong another, if for money they lost their immortal soul... Be thrifty, but not stingy! You, the rich, remember that the property you own you have from God, and God has commanded you to give alms. Remember that every gift given to the poor is taken into account by the Almighty. In the hour of death, of all your possessions only one thing will remain yours – that, which you gave to the poor” (First Pastoral Message, 1899).

The Word of God calls us to this wisdom of the saints through the words of the wise son of Sirach: “My son, deprive not the poor of his living, and do not keep needy eyes waiting. Do not grieve the one who is hungry, nor anger a man in want. Do not add to the troubles of an angry mind, nor delay your gift to a beggar. Do not reject an afflicted suppliant, nor turn your face away from the poor” (Sirach 4:1-4).

23. Thus, the ideal of the Christian community in general and each Christian in particular is service. Our Church has a long history of solidarity and social service, manifested especially in difficult periods of our ecclesial and national history. In the emigration we helped one another, gathering in church communities and socio-cultural organizations, establishing academic institutions through great generosity – in order to preserve our identity, hand down to our descendants the treasure of faith and share it with the people with whom we formed a common society in the counties that welcomed us. In the free world, our hearts felt the full measure of pain and oppression that Greek-Catholics experienced under the rule of the communist regime in the homeland. From the diaspora insistent prayers for persecuted brothers and sisters in faith were raised up to heaven, while a merciful and generous hand reached out to them in a gesture of service in solidarity, which became particularly precious and important after the emergence of our Church from the catacombs. Gratitude for this durable, faithful assistance will never cease to flow from the native land to God and to you, dear brothers and sisters abroad! Now, Ukraine rushes with indispensable assistance to our settlements, especially in sending workers in Christ’s vineyard, priests, who are educated in our seminaries in Ukraine and who subsequently offer spiritual care and social leadership to our faithful in various corners of the world. We must build our present and future on this precious experience of mutual support and solidarity, expanding and enriching this experience with our responses to new challenges and tasks.

24. Ten years ago, in initiating our program of pastoral renewal, called “The Vibrant Parish – a Place to Encounter the Living Christ,” we emphasized that active love of neighbor is the vocation and task of every Christian, and we appealed to all to look at their surroundings in order to recognize how much misfortune and poverty, loneliness and sadness, pain and suffering there is! All these lamentable situations of our earthly life are for us an invitation to an active love that is the expression of our vibrant faith. The Lord wishes to open our eyes to the world’s hardship, so that we might learn to love authentically and show God’s love to our neighbors – through our attention to them, sincere compassion, support, word of comfort and cheer, but especially through works of mercy.

Over these past years, from the time we embarked on this common path of church renewal, we became witnesses and participants in a great movement of solidarity and mercy among the People of God of our church and our people, in Ukraine and abroad. The challenges that befell us and continue to befall us fortunately are not breaking our spiritual

spine, but rather, they mobilize all our spiritual and physical power towards protecting, supporting, and saving others.

We thank all the faithful of our Church and all people of good will in our society, in Ukraine and abroad, for your kindness, dedication, sincerity, and generosity, which you showed, both within the framework of the “Vibrant Parish” program, as well as on many other occasions and in various times of need. With your donations and good works, you not only support hundreds of thousands of victims of war, calamities, injustices, and social inequalities, but you bear clear and humble witness before the face of God to a vibrant faith, to the power of a love that promises the victory of life and resurrection.

25. In the meantime, however, misfortune does not cease. We will always have the poor in our midst. Therefore, today, we renew our appeal to continue to serve the needy, the poor, the downtrodden, steadfastly and conscientiously. “It is only then that we can consider ourselves vibrant Christians and our parishes can become places where care is given to the orphan, protection for the widow, help for the poor, and where the suffering of the sick is shared. Thus, we will reveal to the world the maternal face of the Church and will become the living sign of the presence of God among humankind, according to the words of St. Augustine: ‘If you see charity, you see the Trinity’” (Pastoral Letter of His Beatitude Sviatoslav, *The Vibrant Parish – A Place to Encounter the Living Christ*, 2011).

26. Taking into account the critical state of food and material provisions for numerically significant strata of the population in Ukraine and in other parts of the world as a result of and aggravated by the worldwide coronavirus pandemic, this year we propose to our entire ecclesial community on the occasion of the World Day of the Poor to begin a concrete initiative of mercy – a charitable drive “Feed the Poor One!” to be coordinated by our Office of Social Ministry.

No one among us is so poor that we cannot share with others. Only a closed heart can prevent us from doing this. On the other hand, a heart that contains at least a tiny bit of Christ’s thoughts and feelings (see Phil 2:5), when faced with human pain and suffering cannot but say: “I have compassion for these people” (see Mt 15:32). And this sense of pity in the heart will surely generate sincere prayer, works of mercy, readiness to share, to donate to a charitable cause, in order to save the life of and protect a human being in misery, granting them time, attention, and material means, necessary for life.

Therefore, we appeal to our brothers and sisters in faith throughout the world to join us in this initiative, “Feed the Poor One!” which will henceforth be active in our parish communities and church organizations on a permanent basis. At the same, time we encourage you to create ever new approaches and forms to carry timely assistance, according to your ability, to all the needy without exception, those near and far, believers and unbelievers, for God’s love, which inspires us, does not erect walls and barriers, but lays paths and builds bridges of forgiveness and mercy.

27. Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ! We wish to be ever more a Church that goes out to serve – this is our program, our dream, our direction forward. First of all, we must serve those who are closest to us and feel the absence of attention, support, and comfort. But the law and commandment of love has universal application and character. Therefore, our

Church – in Ukraine and abroad – must learn to reach out ever more beyond the confines of parish, denominational, and ethnic “enclosures” in order to open up in merciful love to all the suffering and destitute, with no regard for denominational or religious membership, race, gender, or age. The only thing that should lead us to an encounter with them is the love of Christ, which inspires us and moves us to action (see 2 Cor 5:14). For a child of God there are no strangers – no foreign human fate, misery, or misfortune. All of us are children of the same Heavenly Father and members of the same human and divine family. Therefore, we have a task and a commission, which we have received from our Savior in the parable of the merciful Samaritan, as a parting word, a testament and command: “You go, and do likewise!” (Lk 10:36).

The blessing of the Lord be upon you!

On behalf of the Synod of Bishops
of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church

† SVIATOSLAV

Given in Kyiv,

At the Patriarchal Cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ,

On the day of the Holy Martyr Longinus the Centurion,

October 29, 2020 A.D.