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**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**

In the Letter of Saint James to all Christians we read the following: *“Now, be patient, brothers, until the Lord’s coming. Think of a farmer: how patiently he waits for the precious fruit of the ground until it has had the autumn rains and the spring rains. You too have to be patient; do not lose heart, because the Lord’s coming will be soon.”* (James 5: 7-8)

James the Apostle was most likely a fisherman, as were the other Apostles, but he knew enough about life on the land to know that there could be no such thing as an impatient farmer. A farmer realizes that there is nothing he can do influence the yearly cycle of winter frosts, summer heat, and the rains of spring and autumn. He must patiently and calmly wait for Mother Nature to play her part before he can, hopefully, reap the rewards of his labor.

James wrote this letter as an encouragement for the first Christians in Jerusalem, who were in impatient anticipation of Jesus’ Second Coming, which they thought to be imminent. But James’ words are just as relevant and just as much an encouragement for us today, as we begin the time of Advent or Pylypivka, in anticipation of our commemoration of the Nativity of Jesus – His First Coming on earth as a human child, his Incarnation.

We are a society with little patience, a society that dislikes waiting with a passion, and we have designed our lives to ensure that we have to wait as little as possible for anything. Instant gratification is the motto by which we live today. And yet, despite all the modern technological advances, it seems that today we are forced to wait more than ever. A banal example suffices: which one of us has not endured sitting in a seemingly endless traffic jam?

But there are more important things in life for which we are called to wait: How long to I have to wait? How long must I wait for that which I have hope for? For that which have worked for? How long must I wait for that which I have prayed about? How long must we wait to see an end to the devastating war in Ukraine? How long must we wait to see my loved ones again?

The season of Pylypivka, the 40-day period of spiritual preparation before the feast of the coming of Christ in His Nativity, teaches us the value of patiently waiting for good things. Because Christ arrives just on time, even if it takes Him a day or two, or thirty years, or four hundred, or even a thousand years to arrive on the scene.

The time of Pylypivka helps us to experience the blessing of patient and prayerful anticipation by reflecting on the steadfast patience of the people of Israel as they awaited the coming of the Messiah for so many centuries. During the time of Pylypivka the Church directs our gaze towards many Old Testament prophets, such as Nahum, Habakuuk, Daniel, and Isaiah, who foretold the coming of Jesus Christ, the Messiah many hundreds of years before He was born.

We find one of the most eloquent descriptions of the patient waiting of Israel in the writings of the greatest messianic prophet, Isaiah: *“Let the wilderness and the dry-lands exult, let the desert rejoice and bloom. Look, your God is coming, he is coming to save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, the ears of the deaf unsealed.”* (Is. 35:1,4-5)

The desert represents the world that God has not yet visited. It is parched and arid, in desperate need of moisture, yet serenely awaits the coming of the Messiah who will transform it into a verdant oasis of His grace and love. “Be certain of it, He is on his way”, says the prophet. This is a holy patience, a patience that does not hurry anything, does not artificially accelerate things, but rather, in faith, accepts everything that God, in His Providence, has decreed. Christian patience is like this. It is like the enduring patience of that farmer who sows in the springtime and awaits the fruit of the earth that grows of its own accord in a manner that he himself does not understand. He knows only that God will ultimately, in His good time, bless him with good things.

May we nurture this same Christian patience in our hearts as we prepare in this time of Pylypivka, for the celebration of the Feast of the Birth of Our Lord.

Sincerely in Christ,

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