

Warm greetings from Slovakia

*By Bishop Milan Lach*

Dear priests, deacons, religious, brothers and sisters in Christ,

Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, appointed me apostolic administrator “sede vacante” of the Eparchy of Parma for the Ruthenians June 17, 2017. The decree was published June 24, 2017 in Rome.

I would like at this time to extend my warm greetings to all of you.

I am sending these greetings from my homeland, which is also the homeland of the ancestors of many of the faithful of the Eparchy of Parma.

At the same time, I am sending these greetings to the land that was the birthplace of my maternal grandfather and which now should become, according to the decision of the Holy Father, my new home.

The distance between these two countries is not an obstacle in living the common Byzantine spiritual heritage, which is amplified by our belonging to the Catholic Church.

In this spirit of our catholicity — this universality, which in Christ reaches beyond all human boundaries — the words of St. Paul in his Letter to the Galatians resound for all of us today: “For through faith you are all children of God in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (3:26-28).

In this spirit of searching for common unity, which is expressed in our liturgical greeting, “Christ is among us.

He is and he shall be,” I am looking forward with joy to our first liturgical meeting.

I cordially invite all of you on Friday, July 21 at 2 p.m., to our Cathedral of St. John the Baptist in Parma, Ohio, where we will celebrate the Divine Liturgy together with His Excellency, the apostolic nuncio to the United States, Archbishop Christophe Pierre, and His Excellency Archbishop William C. Skurla, metropolitan of Pittsburgh, from whom I will formally take up the office of the apostolic administrator of the Eparchy of Parma and to whom I express my thanks already now for his patience and care.

Through this greeting, I warmly invite all of you, as well as other bishops, priests, deacons, religious and faithful of our church, to this solemn liturgy, which should be a manifestation of unity with the entire Catholic Church.

As I write this, I am still in Slovakia, but my thoughts are already with all of you. I am praying for you. I will try to come to you as soon as possible.

I humbly ask you for prayers, because only in unity can we move forward together toward the Kingdom of God.

*Bishop Milan Lach was appointed apostolic administrator of the Eparchy of Parma, effective July 21. You will find Bishop Lach's next message in Eastern Reflections, Voice of the Shepherd.*

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