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A letter from Monsignor Edmond J. Putrimas,  
*Lithuanian Bishops' Conference (LBC) Delegate for the Apostolate  
of Lithuanian Catholics Living Outside of Lithuania*  
Christmas 2012

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**“A child was born to us, a son was given” (Isaiah 9,5).**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Through the mystery of Christmas, God reveals Himself to us in His Son, Jesus Christ. Christmas is a special time of year when we try to become more fully aware of the Living Christ through our attendance at Mass, special retreats, Christmas concerts, prayer as well as through our Lithuanian traditions during the celebration of Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Christmas is not just a holiday - it is a special time when we are drawn into a holy reflective silence, as expressed by the words and music of Holy Night by Franz Grüber.

The Year of Faith, proclaimed by Pope Benedict XVI, began before the Christmas season and reminds us that it is our responsibility to share our gift of faith with others. “We need people who speak to God and about God”, explains the Pope. This is a perfect time for adults to become better acquainted with the main belief associated with Christmas – that “Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God...came down from heaven and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man” (Apostles’ Creed). Let us also share this true meaning of the birth of Christ with our children and grandchildren. They, too, must learn that the heart of the Christmas message is about the birth of our Saviour Emmanuel, who changed the world, and not just about a Santa Claus and a bag of gifts.

The goal of the Year of Faith is to rediscover the joy of faith and, through the new evangelization, to share that joy with others. This is not just the responsibility of priests but is also ours – we must all put our belief in God into action in our lives. So at this time of year, let us remind ourselves that Christmas was God’s greatest gift of love to us – a gift of love that we can truly share. This year I witnessed the sharing of God’s love during my visits to various Lithuanian Catholic communities in the diaspora:

✦ In Sao Palo, Brazil, during the Symposium on God’s Divine Mercy, the program was enriched by the participation of the whole community: the St. Joseph’s Lithuanian parish choir, both folk dancing ensembles, a choir visiting from Montreal, Canada, and local Brazilian theologians and spiritual leaders. They all worked together to bring about a better understanding and appreciation of God’s Divine mercy.

✦ In London, United Kingdom, during the past 100 years, the many volunteer parishioners and pastors of St. Casimir Lithuanian Church through good works have faithfully served and continue to serve the Lithuanian community which, at this time, is one of the largest in the diaspora.

✦ Various Lithuanian communities have established themselves in smaller metropolitan areas of the United States, Canada and Europe where no Lithuanian parishes or missions have been established. Yet on their own initiative, the faithful invite Lithuanian priests and help organize the celebration of the Sunday Liturgy in the Lithuanian language.

I offer my sincere gratitude to all the spiritual leaders – priests, brothers, sisters, catechists and volunteers – for their work with Lithuanian Catholics in our Lithuanian parishes, missions and organizations in the diaspora. As a result of their dedication, their sharing of the Gospel message becomes embodied in the help extended to one’s neighbour, in the support of the downtrodden, in the teaching of children and adults about God and in the preparation of those who will accept the sacraments. The involvement of the laity in the spiritual life of the Lithuanian community helps to maintain our Christian and Lithuanian values and identity.

I invite you all to experience a personal relationship with Christ during your attendance at Mass, especially during this Christmas season.

May the Peace of Christmas be with you and your families during 2013.

Merry Christmas!

