

To be read in Church on the  
Feast of the Nativity

Protocol No. 3087

“Let all of creation make glad; for lo, the Creator is born as an infant in Bethlehem, and the Preëternal One is seen in the flesh” (December 23, Prefestal Canon, Ode 4)

Beloved Fathers and Brethren; Beloved Children in the Lord Who is Born:

Our Lord Jesus Christ is born, and joy has shone upon the whole world. God the Word descended from Heaven and became Man on earth, in order that union and communion of “God with men” might be accomplished. For, as long as He remained in the exaltation of His majesty “in the Heavens” and as long as we abode in the lowliness of our Fall, “His Goodness was unmingled and His love for mankind incommunicable, and there was a great gulf between [God and man], which could not be crossed,” according to St. Gregory the Theologian (Oration XLI.12). However, His Goodness has been revealed and His love for mankind has triumphed.

For this reason, the angelic and celestial hymn of life was heard at the Birth of Christ in Bethlehem of Judæa. The Holy Angels encircled the Divine Manger as though it were a Cherubic Throne and “cried, ‘Glory to God in the Highest’” (December 23, Prefestal Canon, Ode 9). The doxological psalmody of the Church of Christ on earth endeavors to resemble this angelic chanting, matchless and ineffable in its beauty and sweetness, in order to express the joy of Her children over the grandeur of the Feast. The event being celebrated is so sublime and inexpressible that whatever we human beings offer for its sake is very meager.

Nevertheless, it is necessary that we participate in this heavenly and earthly banquet, for behold, we men ultimately offered a “Virgin Mother.” Our Lady, the Theotokos, the All-Immaculate Mother of Emmanuel Who is born, is the most precious and the loftiest gift, before whom bow earth and Heaven, things on earth and things above the earth!

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On the Feast of the Nativity, all things overflow with joy and exultation. Therefore, the sorrow and pessimism of this world cannot cast a shadow on this great optimism of our Church. The Son and Word of God the Father, our Lord and God Jesus Christ, our Fashioner and Redeemer, entered history by the Holy Spirit out of love, and love alone, in order to save us from the malignant virus of sin, from the bitterness and poison of the Devil, and from the darkness of decay and death.

Well-disposed people dance for joy, quake with sacred awe, and are overcome with compunction and contrition as they sing in Orthodox manner of the “wealth of theology.” But ill-intentioned people, however many they may be, are tempest-tossed

by the coldness of unbelief, without knowing whither they are headed or where they will end up. They anxiously strive to exploit the new applications and truly astounding capacities of technology, in order to confront the "invisible enemies" that now relentlessly smite haughty humanity, demonstrating the magnitude of its weakness. And yet, the technocrats and the materialists, at the apogee of their delusion, believe that they can, by themselves, supposedly "enhance," "render immortal," and "deify" unredeemed mankind, making it an eternal prisoner of its thralldom and negativity. They do not understand, in their witlessness, that they thereby serve the cycle of decay and death, as well as him who hides behind the scenes and deceives "the whole world" (Revelation 12:9).

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Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Let us not be intimidated by gloomy scenarios regarding the continuation of life in the new conditions that are taking form. Let us not forget that the Lord of history is the eternal Conqueror, Christ our Savior, Who underwent unremitting persecution even from the time of His Divine Nativity, prefiguring His Cross and burial. In this way, however, by the steadfast and victorious humility of His extreme condescension, He despoiled the principalities and powers of darkness and mocked the vanquished and humiliated demons, dragging them after Him in triumph (cf. Colossians 2:15).

For His faithful, for all who in patience remain steadfast with Him to the end in the face of temptations and trials for His Holy Name, He has prepared an incorruptible crown and an eternal Kingdom of indescribable beauty and inconceivable loveliness. The Lord Himself, the Fount of our lively hope and confidence, is able to convey and open up unexpected solutions to every impasse in our life. We are typically tormented by dark ideas and forebodings when things are excessively difficult. It is then, however, that there is a pressing need for us to enliven our souls by remembering all of the good things that the Lord has shown so vividly and clearly in our lives and can therefore once again make manifest if we seek Him and beseech Him with faith: "All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (St. Matthew 21:22). Prayer in repentance with lively faith will assuredly be rewarded sooner or later.

The mercy of the Lord will encompass him who hopes unswervingly in Divine aid, whereas the scourges of distressing events will torment only unrepentant sinners: "Many are the scourges of the sinner, but he that hopeth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about" (Psalm 31:10).

Whithersoever we turn in the panorama of the Faith, of history, and of the experience of our Church and our Saints, we see manifest confirmation of the wondrous truth

that “The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him” (Psalm 144:18). Only let us not cease from this holy and saving invocation, which provides every blessing, in order that we might be delivered from every insecurity and fear, especially regarding the future. Let us abide with the Savior in His Body, our Holy Orthodox Church—no matter what might happen, what might result—so that we may be vouchsafed His Heavenly Kingdom. Amen!

Holy Nativity 2020  
Christ is Born!  
The Archbishop  
† Kallinikos of Athens

And the Members of the Holy Synod of the Church of the G.O.C. of Greece.