

Hellenic Republic
Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians of Greece
The Holy Synod

To be read in Church on the
Feast of the Nativity

Protocol No. 3167

NATIVITY MESSAGE for 2021

*“To adore Thee, the Sun of Righteousness,
and to know Thee, the Orient from on high.
O Lord, glory to Thee.”
(Apolytikion of the Feast)*

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

The Great Feast of the Nativity of Christ has again arrived, in order to impart to us its celestial joy and other-worldly melodies, to instill in us its sweetness, to ennoble us, to soften our souls, and to exalt us. We are in direct need of its Divine inspiration, for we are passing, each one of us individually, through a period of great tribulation and crisis, as is all of mankind. Our aim in reminding ourselves of some essential truths of our Holy Faith is, by Divine Grace, to strengthen us in God.

In the old Israel, evil shepherds, both political and religious, are frequently and severely castigated by the Holy Prophets and the Righteous on the grounds that the sheep, the people, belong to God, whereas the shepherds thought that the sheep belonged to them. And thus instead of caring for them in a self-sacrificial way, they scattered them and drove them away by the violence and oppression that they applied to them. This is a perennial problem, which is encountered also in the era of Grace. Back then, before Christ, the solution to the problem was to await the advent of the Good Shepherd, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Who would accomplish the work of gathering together and restoring His scattered and beleaguered sheep. As Chief Shepherd, full of affection, peace, and love, and at the same time glorious and humble, He would establish His Church on earth as a Sheepfold and Ark of Salvation.

The Prophet Isaiah sees Him as “a rod out of the root of Jesse, and [as] a blossom [that] shall come up from his root” (Isaiah 11:1), while the Prophet Jeremiah majestically declares: “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will raise up to David a righteous shoot, and a king shall reign and understand, and shall execute judgment and righteousness on the earth” (Jeremiah 23:5). The coming Lord Jesus Christ is manifested as the rising sun, the true “Sun of Righteousness” (Malachi 4:2), and is designated King of the eternal Kingdom. He acts with understanding and wisdom, contrary to secular leaders who lack understanding. He Who “went forth conquering, and to conquer” (Revelation 6:2) judges with right judgment and exercises true righteousness upon the earth. In complete contrast to unjust and oppressive rulers, Christ brings saving justice, security, and peace, since He liberates those under the dominion of the tyrannical Devil,

our sworn and real enemy. Hence, the new People of the Lord can cry out with Divine gladness: “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31). The source of righteousness, truth, health of soul and body, and freedom is found only in God, in the God-Man Jesus Christ, our Savior, Messiah, and Redeemer, the Hope “of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off upon the sea” (Psalm 64:5 [LXX]).

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Beloved Fathers and Brethren:

We are celebrating a unique and astounding event: the humble descent from the Heavens to us, the lowly ones, of the Son and Word of God the Father, in the Holy Spirit, Who created all things, bringing them from non-existence into being. He Who is glorified and exceedingly hymned consents to become an Infant and is born of a humble yet All-Holy and Ever-Virgin Mother. He accepts the Passion and the Cross in order to snatch us from the unrighteous clutches of the all-destroying Devil, giving us power and strength against him, so that we might mock and trample on him.

Since He loved us so much, He is and remains “every day and hour,” as Saint Theodore the Stoudite affirms, our Helper, Supporter, and Refuge, unless we ourselves repel Him because we choose to activate our passions (see his *Great Catechesis* 85). None of the painful, unjust, oppressive, or onerous things that happen in this life can weigh us down as long as we remain unbreakably united, by way of faith and virtue, with the Young Child, the Pre-Eternal God.

Our Lord is not influenced by external appearance, position, or rank; He sees into the depths of hearts and always pronounces just judgment. It is by Divine righteousness that He will judge all people at His Second Coming, in accordance with their deeds and their choices.

Here on earth, amid the maelstrom of unprecedented conditions and tribulations in our days, even we faithful Christians are more and more losing an awareness of His infinite Divine bounties, and we seem at times to be at sea like those who have no hope. However, let us never forget the Light of the Kingdom of Christ the Savior, when He will bestow—as He is assuredly doing even now—upon His chosen servants, those who abide unto the end in His forbearance, His inconceivable gifts that surpass understanding and hearing. We give Him what is least, and He, the Munificent One, gives us what is greatest!

If our heart is His dwelling-place, His manger, then His Divine prudence and wisdom will guide our steps unerringly and will enrich us internally with joy, health, truth, and freedom, regardless of external conditions and circumstances. For we are and will remain with the sole and unique Victor, Redeemer, and Liberator: with our Savior Jesus Christ, Who grants remission of sins and life eternal to all those who place all their hope in Him.

May we become worthy worshippers of His Divine Majesty, and may we glorify Him eternally together with His Holy Angels in the all-harmonious doxology of Heaven, in His eternal Kingdom!

Christ is Born!

THE HOLY SYNOD

The Archbishop

† Kallinikos of Athens

The Members

- † Ioustinos of Euripos and Euboia
- † Gerontios of Piræus and Salamis
- † Chrysostomos of Attica and Boiotia
 - † Gregorios of Thessalonike
 - † Photios of Demetrias
 - † Moses of Toronto
 - † Demetrius of America
- † Ambrosios of Philippi and Maroneia
 - † Kyprianos of Oropos and Phyle
 - † Ambrose of Methone
 - † Klemes of Gardikion
- † Auxentios of Etna and Portland
 - † Theodosios of Bresthena
 - † Christodoulos of Theoupolis
 - † Maximus of Pelagonia

[signed and sealed as a BONA FIDE COPY]

The First Secretary

† Photios of Demetrias