



To the Clergymen, Laymen, Parish Council and Philoptochos Members, and the Monastics of the Metropolis of Atlanta:

My Beloved Ones,

Christ is Born!

The magnitude and value of the *Logos*—God’s Son—taking on flesh to become a human being, is beyond human understanding, in our own era, and throughout the history of the world. His love for Creation was so great that He became a man, in order that Mankind might reconcile itself to God, and become Godly once again.

The Church Fathers and theologians; the saints and faithful of our Church pay very close attention to this historical event. St. Gregory the Theologian says that “There is nothing more important throughout the centuries and millennia of the human race...than the Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.” For by His Incarnation, everything stops—and the new era begins. The troubled past of humanity’s distance from our Creator gives way to the possibility of closeness with Him, if a person desires.

Though the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ is a difficult event for the human mind to comprehend, it is for this reason we are meant to join the constant angelic powers in admiration, glorifying God, on the evening of the birth of His Son.

Indeed, though the magnitude of the Nativity of our Lord is great and beyond our comprehension, it is possible for a person to truly feel it, if we have faith. Only through faith, can we truly come to grasp this event which is beyond all our reasoning. Through faith, may we truly experience this feast, offering praise and glory to our loving God.

The spiritual fathers of our Church also struggled with this question: what can we as human beings offer to our great God, who is without beginning and without end, yet took on flesh for our sakes? A hymn explains “...*The angels offer Thee a hymn; the heavens a star; the Magi, gifts; the shepherds, their wonder; the earth, its cave; the wilderness, the manger... and we offer Thee a Virgin Mother...*” We should not forget the Virgin Mary, the Theotokos, who gave birth to our Lord, fulfilling the centuries old words of the Prophet Isaiah and others. This why a Holy Father says, “*The creator becomes a child, and He who is perfect becomes a kid in order for us, who are His creatures, to become holy.*”

Our God who comes to earth and takes on flesh, offers us many gifts; one of which is peace. Before His coming, peace did not exist—either among nations, or in the hearts of men, because we had separated ourselves from God, who is the source of all peace. Now, we may a taste of His peace, should we desire it and will it.

We human beings understand the importance and the need for peace, especially in today’s society—where there is still animosity even in the birthplace of our Lord. But the Devil seeks to remove this gift by instilling the spirit of hatred, and the misunderstanding that peace can be found in earthly and human power. We as Christians supposedly know Jesus Christ—though we have not yet become His followers. We try to prioritize our will and our reality over the lives of fellow men.

From the moment of His birth, the phrase “peace on earth” has become part of a song, a greeting, a dream, and a prayer. For we understand that nothing can be done with peace in our hearts, least of all becoming Godly. As Archbishop Iakovos of blessed memory used to say, “This kind of peace, even after 2,000 years, continues to be important.” As St. Paul says, “*For He Himself is our peace, who... has torn down the dividing wall of hostility*” (Ephesians 2:14).

I ask that you join me in prayer, so that as Orthodox Christians, we grow closer to our God, understanding His coming, and His presence on earth. With this kind of prayer, we can offer Him a gift: that is, our infirmities. Through His strengthening by faith, we may become valuable members of our society, in order to better the lives of our fellow man, and to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

Let us follow the spirit of hymnographer, who says, “*Come all you Christians, and let us go to see the miracle that is taking place today, which is beyond our understanding. And as we worship with faith, let us cry out, today He is born in Bethlehem of a Virgin.*”

Merry Christmas!

+ALEXIOS
Metropolitan of Atlanta