30/12/2025

Patriarch Daniel says Christ came to sanctify the world from within in Christmas homily

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His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel said on the Feast of the Nativity of the Lord that Christ came into the world to sanctify creation and to teach humanity, from within it, to give thanks to God for the very existence of the created universe and for human life itself.

“Christ comes into the world to sanctify the world and, from within it, to teach people to thank God for the very existence of the created universe and for their own existence or life,” Patriarch Daniel said in his Christmas homily.

The Romanian Orthodox Patriarch celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Patriarchal Cathedral, together with Patriarchal Auxiliary Bishop Varlaam of Ploiești and Assistant Bishop Timotei of Prahova of the Archdiocese of Bucharest.

Patriarch Daniel stressed that this thanksgiving which Christ the Lord offers to the Father on behalf of the entire world, and for everything that exists and has been created, is called Eucharist — or gratitude.

“He instituted the mystery of gratitude or thanksgiving in order to teach us to thank the Heavenly Father for the existence of the world, for our life, and for all the blessings, known and unknown, that we receive from God,” he said.

Image of the Father

The Patriarch noted that a second reason for the Son of God’s coming into the world is that, according to Holy Scripture, the Son is the image of the Father.

“When Holy Scripture says that God created man in His image, the Holy Fathers interpreted this as meaning that God created man according to the image of the Son. The Son is the image of God, and man was created according to the image — that is, in conformity with the image of God, in conformity with Christ the Lord,” Patriarch Daniel explained.

“The One who created man created him according to the image of Christ, who was to become man. Christ the Lord comes into the world because the world is the gift

of God the Father to the Son, and He becomes man because man was created according to the image of God, who is the Son," he added.

Gifts of the Magi

Although the Lord came into the world to save it and to deify it, He was not received by people and was born in a cave.

"When the Magi came to bring gifts, they nevertheless found Him in a house, not in the cave. The gifts of the Magi were not offered in the cave, because in the meantime part of the population that had come for the census in Bethlehem had returned home, and space became available in the guest house, the inn or house where foreign travellers were lodged," Patriarch Daniel explained.

The Magi offered gold to the Child because they recognised that Christ, born in Bethlehem, is a King — an eternal King.

"The frankincense offered by the Magi to the Child Jesus shows that He is God, to whom incense and prayer are offered, and at the same time that He is the great High Priest, the eternal Priest," the Patriarch of Romania said.

Myrrh, he added, has a particular significance, as together with aloe it was used to anoint the bodies of the dead in order to prevent decay.

"In a prophetic way, the Magi, through this myrrh, show that Christ, who was born in Bethlehem, will pass through death. He will pass through the sacrifice of the Cross, but He will not remain in death, according to the Prophet David, who said: 'You will not give Your Holy One over to corruption,'" Patriarch Daniel said.

What gifts can we offer the Christ Child?

In the final part of his homily, Patriarch Daniel said that Christians have learned from the Magi to offer the Lord what is best and most beautiful.

"That is why our churches are adorned with beautiful paintings, with beautiful vestments offered to Christ, with beautiful icons and sacred vessels. We offer what is most beautiful to God because the Church is the home of all Christians — rich and poor, elderly, young and children alike," he said.

The Patriarch urged the faithful to offer, like the Magi, the most precious gifts of all: "Instead of gold, let us offer right or Orthodox faith and good deeds. This is the most precious gold — right faith and good works flowing from generous and merciful love. Instead of frankincense, let us offer steadfast and fervent prayer."

"Instead of myrrh, let us offer a pure life, achieved through the crucifixion of selfish

passions and the cultivation of humble love, rich in good works. These three are the gifts of all Christians, whether rich or poor," he added.

At the end of the sermon, the Patriarch of Romania wished "Many happy returns" to those bearing the name Cristian and its derivatives.

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