

H.E. Metropolitan Cleopas of Sweden's Homily on the Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos St. George Cathedral of Stockholm



Dearly Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On September 6th, the Holy Orthodox Church celebrates the Nativity of the Theotokos. At the very beginning of the new ecclesiastical year, the Church presents to us the birth of the person through whom the Son of God would enter human history. For this reason, Saint Andrew of Crete calls today's celebration "the beginning of the feasts" and the doorway through which grace and truth enter the world.

The birth of the Theotokos was the answer to the prolonged prayer of her righteous parents, Joachim and Anna. Although they had reached old age without children, they did not abandon their trust in God. Their sorrow became prayer, and their barrenness became spiritual fruitfulness.

The birth of the Virgin Mary is not celebrated merely as the birth of an exceptional person. It marks the beginning of the visible preparation for the Incarnation of the

Son of God. Saint John of Damascus invites all creation to rejoice in “the nativity of joy for the whole world,” because through the Theotokos the sorrow of Eve would be transformed into gladness.

The first Eve listened to the voice of disobedience; the new Eve, the Virgin Mary, would respond to God with humility and complete trust: “Behold the maidservant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” Through her consent, the eternal Word received our human nature, so that humanity might be healed, renewed, and restored to communion with God.

As we begin the new ecclesiastical year, the Nativity of the Theotokos reminds us that every true beginning comes from God. Let us ask the Theotokos to intercede for us, so that the year before us may become a time of repentance, spiritual renewal, peace, and faithful service to Christ and His Church. Amen!

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