

29/11/2019

His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco issues his Advent Message 2019



His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco has released his Advent Message for 2019. Read the full text below:

Beloved in the Lord,

Having begun the Nativity Fast period and as we enter the holiday season, we have entered a rich time in our lives as Orthodox Christians. Like the beauty of the decor that will fill our homes, the Church fills us with spiritual beauty in this season, calling us to become more aware of God's presence in our lives.

This festive season begins with our American celebration of Thanksgiving. Our homes will be open to our family and friends for a feast that celebrates how we have been blessed by God. As we gather at the table,

consider the following benediction from the Book of Sirah: ***“Bless the God of all, who in every way does great things...May He give us gladness of heart!”*** (Sirah 50:22-23). Our first action this season is to acknowledge that God blesses us every day for which we should bow our heads in thanks.

Then we will celebrate some of the most renowned saints of our Church: Katherine the Great Martyr who was just celebrated, Andrew the First-called, Barbara the Great Martyr, John of Damascus, Savas the Sanctified, Nicholas of Myra, Spyridon of Trimythous, and Eleftherios of Illyria. They adorn our calendar with beauty and light. Each in their unique lives, they are examples of lives lived in Christ. They are examples of faith, of witness, and of suffering, but they are also examples of philanthropy, of excellence in teaching, and of pastoral leadership. As we celebrate their feasts we should strive to study their lives as models for our imitation as followers of Christ today.

Finally, we will reach the culmination of the season when we begin the celebration of the Nativity of our Savior Jesus Christ. For us, desiring to know God, we look to Jesus Christ. God enters history and the world when Christ is born. As the Gospel of John states, ***“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father”*** (John 1:14). The incarnation of Christ is a mystery, that is to say, it is far beyond our understanding. Saint Gregory the Theologian taught, ***“He was laid in a manger-but he was glorified by angels, and proclaimed by a star, and worshiped by the Magi.”*** We will all sing in the Kontakion of Christmas, ***“for to us there has been born a little child, God before the ages.”***

Dearly Beloved, the Church invites us to prepare to celebrate the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ through this rich and meaningful season. A hymn of Christmas begins, ***“Make ready....”*** These days are our time to ready ourselves through the fast, through prayers, through philanthropic acts, and reflection upon the mystery of the incarnation and on the lives of God’s Saints, and as we continually thank Him for His divine condescension. God’s presence in our lives must be evident by our awareness of this mystery of the incarnation, through this season of beauty, lights and color.

As we grow in awareness, as we see the lights and colors of the season, let us share them with our brothers and sisters who are in need. At a time when many live in the darkness of isolation and loneliness, of poverty, and ostracization and marginalization, our families and parishes can radiate the beauty and light of faith in Jesus Christ through acts of hospitality, understanding, and philanthropy. In so doing we bear witness to the light so that the world might believe (cf John 1, 7-8).

May our Savior, Who is coming to us as a little babe, grant you all His Kindness and Mercy.

With Love in Christ,
+ G E R A S I M O S
Metropolitan of San Francisco

— Source: sanfran.goarch.org