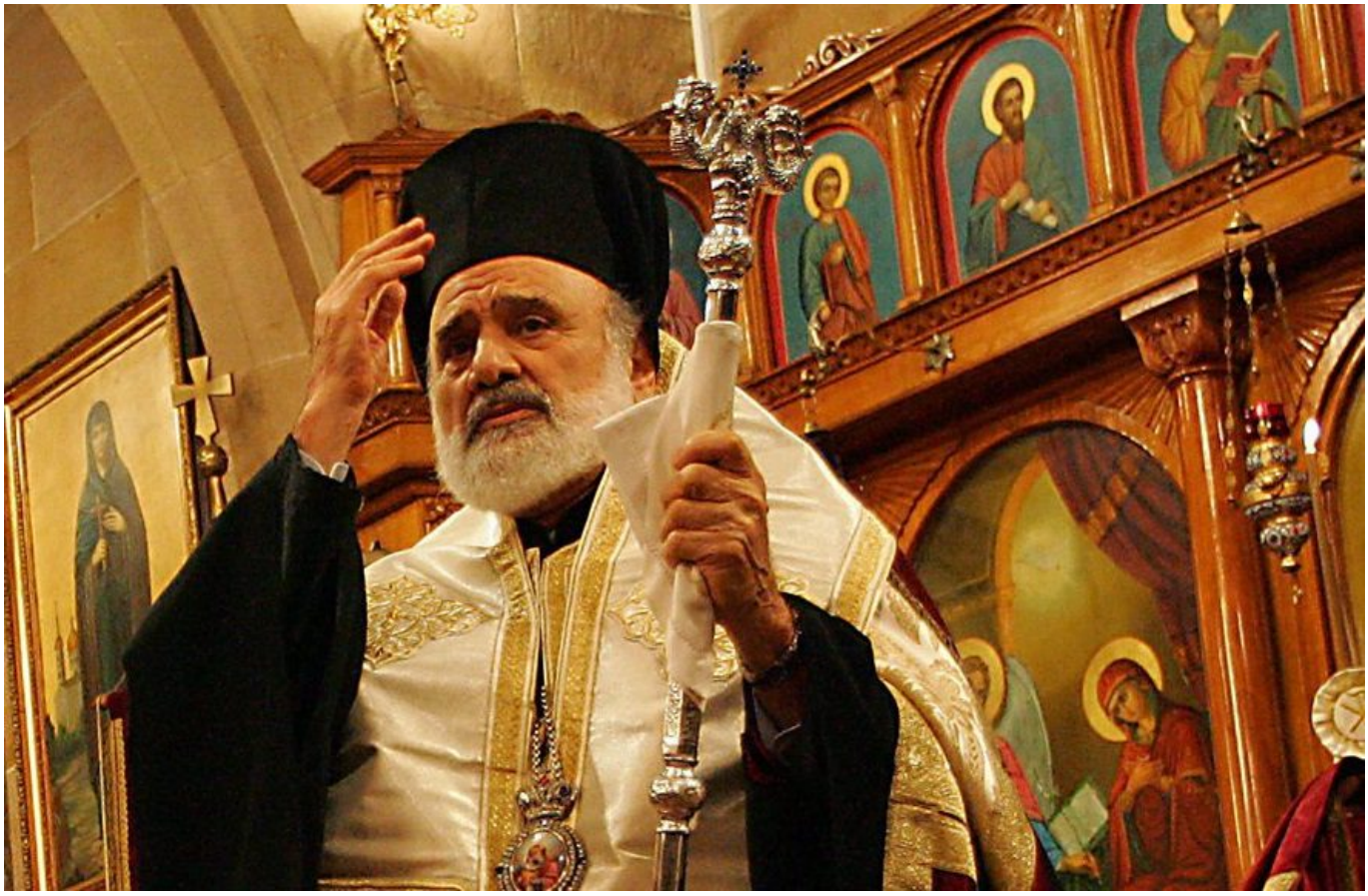
24/12/2018

Christmas Encyclical 2018 – STYLIANOS by the Grace of God Archbishop of Australia



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA
CHRISTMAS ENCYCLICAL 2018
STYLIANOS
By God's Mercy Archbishop of Australia

To all Clergy and the faithful of our Archdiocese
Brother concelebrants and children in the Lord,

"Christ is born, glorify Him!"

Thus we have been chanting for centuries every year in our Churches. But it seems that we have not yet sufficiently understood.the kind of unprecedented truth of our Faith that we proclaim with this our triumphant song. If one morning we took to the streets and shouted "the world is on fire, wake up!" surely we would cause a

general alarm. Yet, on the contrary, the call “Christ is born” does not impress us any longer, nor does it surprise us. It is as if it is a wish that we say almost instinctively, like the greeting “good morning”. And it is as if it is about a dim mythological remembrance, not to say —even worse— that it is about a “conventional lie”!

And yet this message, which comes out of the depths of Orthodox worship and life, constitutes the most exciting message ever heard in the world. We will not be able to understand the theological validity and the world-saving significance of “Christ is born” if we think that here we are simply being informed of the birth of a certain God. In any case, even Antiquity had spoken about “theogonies” and “theophanies” more than sufficiently.

The key to understanding the amazing truth of “Christ is born” is found not so much in the announcement of the birth, as it is in the manner in which this announcement was formulated. It does not tell us that “Christ was born”, nor that “Christ will be born”.

It tells us that “Christ is born”. What is the meaning of this strange present tense? It simply means that Christ, “the Son of the Living God”, is not a past event that is gone, nor a future that is unattainable.

God is “present everywhere and fills all things”. God is present here and today, in the every here and in the every day. From the moment that God became man, in the face of every person we can see the God-Man. Because if God was united with human nature “without confusion” in order to preclude every idolatry, yet he was united “without division” precluding every abomination.

St. Maximus the Confessor assures us that the Logos of God “takes flesh” continually within History and in every human person. The kind of concrete and visible form it will take in our corruptible body depends on how much space we will offer Him. Did not the Apostle Paul teach the same truth, in a more dramatic tone when he said; “For I bear the marks of the Lord Jesus in my body” (Gal. 6:17)?

On the one hand, therefore, the verse “Christ is born” constitutes God’s unceasing present in the world of perpetual flow and instability. On the other hand, it indicates the unique stability and divine aspect of the world, which is the theandric character by grace within flowing History. In these two “roots’ of the divine plan, we are called as faithful to live with a sense of responsibility and gratitude the unceasing present of God and the passing present of man.

These are the two basic sentiments — responsibility and gratitude — that must direct our life, knowing that nothing takes place in History in the absence of God, but also nothing is done in the absence of the human person. When the boundaries

of our own limited present remain open before the benevolent radiance of God’s presence everywhere, then they are no longer boundary marks on which our own personal time is exhausted. They change into definitions of divine Grace which transform the end of the human person into consummation, and our definitive farewell into a Eucharistic doxology.

Therefore, with a renewed sense of optimism let us look again at the world with love and trust, with patience and tolerance, with affection and enthusiasm. The moving power behind all this shall always be the assurance that “a young child was born for us, the pre-eternal God”

To Him be the glory and the power unto the ages. Amen!

With fervent prayers to the Lord

CHRISTMAS 2018