

25/12/2018

## **Encyclical of Archbishop Gregorios for the Nativity of Christ 2018**



Dearly Beloved in the Lord,

The bells of the Churches of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Orthodox Church of the World will ring happily again this year to remind us that 'The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Emmanuel, which means God is with us' (Matt. 1:23).

This unprecedented Event, this age-old will of God Worshiped in Holy Trinity became reality two thousand years ago, the echo of which continues to inspire, to enlighten, to guide and to move the steps of the soul and of the body of the human family. The Church, like the Magi of the East, continues to offer glory and spiritual worship to the Holy Infant, Christ, Who was born in Bethlehem of Judaea 'at the time of the reign on earth of Augustus, the polyarchy of humankind ceased, and because of you, who has taken flesh from the Pure one, the belief in polytheism of idols was rejected and the Nations believed in the one Authority of God' (glorifying hymn of the Great Vespers of Christmas).

Christianity changed the flow of human history and separated the world into the 'before-Christ' and 'after Christ' periods. Thus is confirmed the word of the Lord to

the Holy Apostles 'Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age' (Matt. 28: 19-20).

The Mystery of Christmas continues to bless and concern Humanity and attract attention because Christ is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End of the Creation, for the sake of which 'he took flesh and mingled with people'. As the hymn-writer characteristically chants: 'your Kingdom, Christ, God, Kingdom in all the ages and your Reign across all generations' (hymn of the Great Vespers of Christmas). The whole of the Creation contributed to the Event of Christmas 'the earth offered the cave, the desert the manger, the Angels the hymn, the heavens the star, the magi the gifts, and we the people the Virgin Mother' (hymn of the Great Vespers of Christmas).

We Christians, and with us the whole of the World, celebrate this unsurpassed Event and like the Apostles and the Martyrs and the Saints our life, we continue, despite the hardship and the sorrows that life brings to our path daily. Christmas is the salt that gives taste to our temporary life, as did the Holy Writers of the New Testament, the Teachers and the Fathers of the Church, the Saints and the Martyrs and all Those who lived through the Mystery of Christmas during their lives. For this reason, those Sacred Days of Christmas, of the Circumcision of the Holy Infant, of the New Year and of Epiphany, - which, God permitting, we are called upon to celebrate with due religious conduct and reverence, - let it be the beginning of the renewal of our Faith to Him, Christ, who is the Light and the Joy and the blameless hope of life and history of the Human Race. Let us prepare to receive communion of the Immaculate Sacraments, of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus, in absolution of our sins and life eternal. Let us renew our expectations for the love and the mercy of Christ for our own personal and family life, the extension of our love to others, friends and enemies. Let us pray for the peace of the whole world and the stability of the Sacred Churches of God, for the healing of the wounds daily inflicted upon the Church. Let the grace of God bridge the differences among people with the aura of that Love which surpasses all minds and by means of its clemency soothes the wounds and the temptations of malice and passion which lurk in our soul and heart and alienate us from that Love which bent the heavens and descended to heal the wounds of our souls and body. Like Paul the Apostle, brothers and fathers, let us pray so that they will become a reality and a way of life for each one of us: 'whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable-if anything is excellent or praiseworthy-think about such things' (Phil. 4:8).

May, the Only-born Son and Word of God, Christ, who took flesh from the Holy Spirit and Mary the Virgin and was born in Bethlehem of Judaea, be with us forever. To Him belongs the Glory and infinite Mercy to the ages of ages. Amen.

London, Christmas 2018

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of Thyateira and Great Britain