20/12/2021

Metropolitan Cleopas of Sweden – Episcopal Encyclical for the Feast of the Nativity 2021



Honorable Public Officials and Community Leaders,

Reverend Clergy,
Members and friends of the Holy Metropolis of Sweden and All Scandinavia,

Beloved Brethren in Christ,
Today, my beloved Brothers and Sisters, He who holds the entirety of creation in His hand is born of the Virgin Mary. The sacred hymnographer reminds us that the chapter of our salvation is singular, yet repeats itself annually, through the use of the term “today.” In other words, our hymnography uses the continuous present tense, since the historic event of the Nativity of Christ according to the flesh does not disappear into the far off past, but is experienced in the Church as ever-present grace, and relived by all faithful in their lives. And so, it becomes a vital event that leaves its mark on us and transforms our lives. By celebrating today the Birth of the Savior, which took place “in the days of Herod the King” (Matthew, 2:1), the Church invites us all to once again become eyewitnesses and mutual participants in this

mystery of Divine Dispensation.

Therefore, this grace and supreme honor afforded to us is not only a spiritual privilege, but also a reminder that we must renew ourselves in the mystical event of the Divine Incarnation and offer up all our existence to our Creator and Maker, to serve as a manger and birthplace for Him who is uncontainable.

Being cognizant of the grandeur of God's extreme condescension for us all, we must at the same time confess that our contemporary lifestyle and the dizzying pace at which we lead our lives often leads to our spiritual paralysis. By ignoring God, the modern world also ignores humanity as a result. Hence, many self-styled "saviors" prey upon contemporary man's spiritual weakness and promise a new life and new paradise, devoid of Christ!

And so, man often proves himself to be poor in his riches and weak in his supposed might. After all, the difficult situation in which all of humanity has come into over the past two years, scourged by the Covid-19 pandemic, which reaffirms to us all on a daily basis just how small and powerless we are in the face of a deadly virus, reminds us of this fact.

Our Church, which empathizes with the suffering, challenges, and ordeals facing humanity today, shares the hope that arises from the Gospel with everyone without exception, along with the invitation of the Incarnate Logos to every "weary and burdened" person, that "they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

Inviting all of you to come together once again and celebrate the marvelous miracle of Christ's Nativity with humility and contrition of heart, let us give praise with one mouth and with one heart to God's Pre-Eternal Logos, Who was born among us, and together with the heavenly powers let us chant the hymn: "Holy are You, Christ our God, glory to You Who became man for us."

I extend my heartfelt wishes that the new year set to dawn will be filled with all of God's bountiful blessings, be healthy and spiritually fruitful!

† Metropolitan Cleopas of Sweden and All Scandinavia

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