

20/12/2023

## **Christmas Message 2023 - H.E. Metropolitan Ambrosios**



My dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

Because our God is full of mercy, he caused a light to rise for us from above, to enlighten those who live in darkness and under the shadow of death, and to lead our steps in the way of peace (Lk. 1: 78-79).

These biblical verses are a small excerpt from a very important prophecy and at the same time, they comprise a wonderful hymn. The words belong to Zacharias, the father of the Prophet and Forerunner John the Baptist, and he exclaimed them after the miraculous birth of his child. This is known as the last prophecy of the Old Testament and the first one of the New Testament—as the bridge between the two Testaments.

The prophet Zacharias of the New Testament helps us to approach, as much as it is

humanly possible, the inexplicable mystery of the divine incarnation of Christ and His unique mission in the world.

Firstly, Zacharias explains to us that, in His great mercy, God caused a light from above to rise for all people. Secondly, the light, Jesus Christ, came down to earth to enlighten those who live in darkness and under the shadow of death. Thirdly, Christ came to guide our steps in the way of peace for our eternal salvation.

This prophecy did not only concern the people of the era in which it was first spoken. It concerns us today too, and it will continue to concern humanity until the end of the world.

All of us who have been deemed worthy, “by the gift of God’s grace” (Eph. 3:7), to see “the true light, which as it comes into the world enlightens every person” (Jn. 1:9), should pay attention to this prophecy’s missionary dimension. Let each of us examine what we have done and what we are doing for “those who live in darkness and under the shadow of death,” since they have not yet known Christ. Let us contemplate on our sacred duty to spread Orthodox witness in our local community, so that we may help others “guide their steps on the path of peace.”

Today when the world community is in great turmoil due to multiple devastating wars and civil conflicts, the value of peace seems even more precious. For this reason, it is absolutely necessary for us to deeply understand that the lack of peace in the world is a result of the lack of inner peace in the hearts of people, because true peace is given only by “the Prince of Peace” (Is. 9:6). Yet, how will our neighbors believe in Him, if they have not heard of Him? Moreover, how will they hear about Him, unless someone who knows Christ preaches Him to them? That is why it is prophesied in the Scriptures: “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach peace, of those who preach good things!” (Rom. 10:14-15). How beautiful is the coming of those who bring glad tidings of peace, glad tidings of good things! Because true life consists of inner peace, true life lies in the gifts of the resurrection and the love that triumphs over death.

Based on the missionary dimension of the great feast of Christmas, let us hope that a holy zeal to be born in our hearts to evangelize, “where the name of Christ has not yet been heard” (Rom. 15:20), and to preach the great joy “that for your sake a Savior was born, and this is Christ, the Lord” (Lk. 2:10-11).

Let us hope that every year more and more of our fellow human beings will sing on Christmas day: “God of peace, Father all-merciful, you sent us the great Messenger, an angel of your will, and granted us your peace. Having been led to

the light of your divine knowledge, we come out of the darkness to sing to You, the philanthropist Lord, a hymn of glory.” (Christmas Katavasia, Ode E´)

My beloved, on behalf of all our clergy and collaborators in the Lord, I wish all of you a joyous and blessed Christmas. May our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ always flood our lives with His light and peace.

With much love and special honor in the new-born and manifested Lord,

+ Metropolitan Ambrosios of Korea and Exarch of Japan

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