

Nativity Encyclical of the Russian True Orthodox Diocese of Western Europe

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill among men!” (Luke 2:14)

Beloved Clergy and Faithful of the True Orthodox Diocese of Western Europe,

As we prepare to celebrate the glorious Nativity of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ, let us lift our hearts in thanksgiving for the ineffable mystery of the Incarnation. The Only-Begotten Son of God, born of the Ever-Virgin Mary, takes on our humanity to reconcile us with the Father. In His infinite condescension, He comes to dwell among us, restoring the image and likeness of God in man, shattered by sin.

The Holy Fathers teach us that this wondrous act of divine love is the cornerstone of our salvation. St. Gregory the Theologian proclaims, *Christ is born, glorify Him! Christ comes from heaven, go out to meet Him!*” Let us follow this exhortation with fervor, rejecting the darkness of this world and embracing the uncreated Light of Bethlehem.

In these times of apostasy and compromise, True Orthodoxy stands as a faithful witness to the fullness of the Gospel. As St. Athanasius the Great reminds us, *The Son of God became man so that we might become gods.*” This deification, or theosis, is the ultimate goal of our Christian life, made possible by Christ’s Incarnation. Yet, it requires unwavering fidelity to the Truth, which our Holy Tradition has preserved against the winds of modernity and innovation.

The humble cave in Bethlehem reminds us that the Kingdom of God is not of this world. Just as the Magi and shepherds recognized the King of Kings in the most unlikely of settings, so must we discern the authentic Church amidst the spiritual desolation of our age. St. John Chrysostom exhorts us, *Let us not seek earthly things, but those which are heavenly.*” True Orthodoxy calls us to stand apart from the allure of worldly power and false unity, offering instead a pure and unblemished confession of faith.

Dear brethren, as we behold the Christ Child lying in the manger, let us reflect on His humility and sacrifice. St. Ephraim the Syrian marvels, *The Mighty One became a babe, and the Infinite was wrapped in swaddling clothes.*” Let this mystery inspire us to humility, obedience, and love for one another, for only in such virtues do we find peace and communion with God.

On this radiant Feast of the Nativity, let us rededicate ourselves to the Holy Orthodox Faith, handed down to us through the blood of the martyrs and the wisdom of the Fathers. Let our worship and lives proclaim the eternal truth that *God is with us!*” (Isaiah 7:14)

May the grace of the Newborn Savior fill your hearts and homes with His peace and joy. Through the intercessions of the Most Holy Theotokos and all the saints, may we walk worthily of our high calling in Christ Jesus.

With blessings in the Incarnate Lord,

+Bishop Philaretos

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