

GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

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The Nativity of Christ

As the Father has sent me, so I send you.
(John 20:21)

To the Most Reverend Hierarchs, the Reverend Priests and Deacons, the Monks and Nuns, the Presidents and Members of the Parish Councils of the Greek Orthodox Communities, the Distinguished Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Day, Afternoon, and Church Schools, the Philoptochos Sisterhoods, the Youth, the Hellenic Organizations, and the entire Greek Orthodox Family in America

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On this glorious Feast of the Nativity of our Lord, we hear from the Holy Scriptures and the beautiful hymns of our services that sacred story of how Christ was born of the Virgin Mary and as an infant was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. We contemplate the miraculous and joyous appearance of the angels proclaiming to the shepherds the good news: *For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord* (Luke 2:11). We marvel at the inspiration of the wise men as they traveled from distant lands to offer gifts and reverence to the newborn King.

We celebrate this Feast and event filled with grace, the Incarnation of Jesus Christ for our salvation. He was sent for us. He was sent to reveal the magnitude of God's love for us, to lead us in the path of righteousness, and to make possible our salvation and our full reconciliation with God. He came so that we could know Him, and in Him find truth and life.

Today, we know Him as the Christ child, the hope for all humanity, and the fulfillment of divine promises. He is the *dayspring from on high* (Luke 1:78), the Anointed One, who has come *to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to give sight to the blind, and to set at liberty those who are oppressed* (Luke 4:18).

We know Him as truth and love. In the Vespers of the Feast we proclaim, "When the Lord Jesus was born of the holy Virgin, all the world was enlightened." He reveals truth, and the light of truth shines within our hearts and minds, dispelling the darkness of sin and death. He reveals that the foundation of truth is God's love for us, and with this love He *became flesh and dwelt among us*, so that we behold His glory, *full of grace and truth* (John 1:14).

Today, we know Him through His power to give life. We know Him because He knows our human condition, our struggles and limitations, and our temptations. Christ entered our life in a miraculous way, to sanctify our humanity and to restore us to the image and likeness of God. In so doing He became the way to heaven and eternal communion with God. Through His offering He defeated death and revealed His power to give abundant and eternal life.

With Christ in our midst we offer a beautiful witness of Him through our worship. We also affirm that the Feast of the Nativity is a feast of invitation. He assured us that as the Father sent Him, He sends us to invite others to come and know Him (John 20:21). He sends us as His voice into a challenging and changing world. As the shepherds responded to the proclamation of the angels, we glorify and praise God for all that we have seen and heard, and we are sent by Him to share the good news. As the wise men came and worshipped him, our hearts are filled with joy and thanksgiving. We are sent into a changing world as witnesses of His grace proclaiming, *For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: And His name is Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, the Prince of Peace* (Isaiah 9:6).

May the blessings of the incarnate God, our Lord Jesus Christ be with each of you and your families during this holy season of His Nativity, and together may we be the voice of Christ inviting all to come and see and glorify Him.

With paternal love in Him,

†DEMETRIOS
Archbishop of America