



NATIVITY MESSAGE OF HIS BEATITUDE METROPOLITAN TIKHON 2023

December 25, 2023
Protocol 12/004

To the clergy, monastics, and faithful of the Orthodox Church in
America, my beloved children in the Lord,

Christ is born! Glorify him!

At the Vigil for today's feast, we sang with the words of St. Germanus of Constantinople: "Today the Virgin gives birth to the Maker of all. Eden offers a cave and a star discloses Christ, the Sun, to those in darkness" (second sticheron at the aposticha).

In a supreme paradox, the created world today offers shelter to the one who contains all things in the palm of his hand. Coming among us in obscurity, "born of a woman, born under the Law" (Gal. 4:4), in the form of a tiny baby, "in the form of a servant" (Phil. 2:7), hidden in a dark cave, nevertheless he shines his light upon our gloom.

Becoming small, he allows us to touch his greatness. Clothing himself in our weakness, he permits us to rest in his strength. Embracing obscurity, he brings enlightenment to the ends of the earth. Ministering as a servant, he shows his love as our Master, our Lord, and our King.

In our present day, as the gloom waxes and the darkness closes, as "wars and rumors of wars" abound (Mt. 24:6), the icon of the Nativity—Eternity laid as a baby in a crib, Salvation in the form of a newborn child, Redemption in the weakness of infant flesh—is as timely as ever. As an American hymn writer wrote over a century and a half ago, in the dark streets of Bethlehem, "the hopes and fears of all the years" are met together on the night of the Savior's birth. If we seek an answer, a



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solution, to the questions of our age and every age, that Answer, the very Word of the Father, can be found lying in a manger, sleeping, yet with his heart awake (Songs 5:2); resting in his tiny human body, but at work as God (Jn. 5:17).

Once the wise men journeyed, not to meet Herod in his court of splendor, nor to seek Caesar on his Roman throne, but to find a Child in his Mother's arms. Likewise, we do not seek peace, salvation, and joy from the hand and works of "princes and sons of men" (Ps. 145:3), but from the Lord who appears to us in silence, showing us the way of humility, stillness, forgiveness, meekness, and mercy.

Today, as we join the righteous Joseph, the magi, and the shepherds in worshipping the Lord at his Nativity, enthroned in the lap of his Mother, we place our trust in his care, his providence, his justice, which transcend all human comprehension. Setting aside our own righteousness, we repent and embrace the peace and silence of the manger. Setting aside the grand and distracting worries of the world, we concern ourselves with generosity and forbearance towards our brethren and neighbors.

As St. Porphyrius of Kavsokalyvia writes, "Only prayer, silence, and love are effective." Resting in prayer and silence, through faith and trust we encounter the love of the one who became flesh for our sake, in whom every conflict and battle ceases, the Peace and Power of God, come to reign in our hearts through his Incarnation. May we always accept that love with repentance, humility, and gratitude, and joyfully share it with others, this day and every day.

To Christ our God and Savior, born this Christmas day, be all glory, together with his Father who is without beginning and his All-holy Spirit, unto the endless ages of ages. Amen.

Christ is born! Glorify him!

I remain as ever,
Sincerely yours in the joy of our newborn Lord and God and Savior,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a cross symbol followed by stylized cursive letters, likely representing the name Tikhon.

+TIKHON
Archbishop of Washington
Metropolitan of All America and Canada

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