

ENCYCLICAL

for the Holy Nativity of Our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ

Embracing the Advent of Our Savior: The Peace of Our Hearts and the Peace of the World

“Be at peace within yourself, and Heaven and earth will be at peace”
(Abba Isaac the Syrian)

Beloved Brethren in Christ and Children in the Lord:

A. Our Participation in the Mystery of Christ

Blessed and glorified be “the God of love and peace,”¹ “the Father of mercies,”² Who has found us worthy once again, today, to adore in the Holy Spirit the “Appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ”³ in the flesh and Who calls us to elevate ourselves, coming to peace with Him, to peace within ourselves, and to peace with one another.

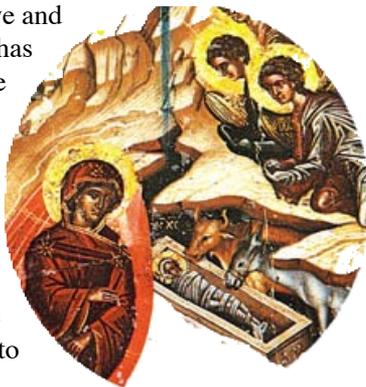
This great and singular historical Event of Divine Economy bears witness to the “exceeding riches of the Grace” of God and to the “great love wherewith He loved us.”⁴

Indeed, we who, by God’s mercy, are members of the Most Holy Orthodox Church have the special blessing of celebrating this Event, not merely as an anniversary, but by participating mysteriologically in the Fact of the Economy of the Incarnation.

We should never lose sight of the great truth, that our Church’s Worship, and especially the Divine Liturgy, constitutes an invitation to participate in the “Appearing”⁵—that is, in the Incarnation and manifestation in the world—of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.

This means, to be sure, that the Liturgy is the history of this Event of the Divine Economy, but it is also the very Event itself; it is the history of our salvation, but also our salvation itself; it is the Eucharistic actualization of the Advent of God the Word, but also the revelation of the Kingdom of God.

Through the sacred Mysteries of our Most Holy Church, we experience the past—that is, the Incarnation—and also the future—that is, the Kingdom of God—as a continuous present, since we participate in the Theandric Person of Christ, namely in Him Who is “the Alpha and the Omega, He Who is, Who was, and Who is to come.”⁶



Christ, through the Church and specifically through its Worship, does not simply preach the Truth, but calls us to participate in the Truth, that is, in Himself, in the Mystery of Christ, and to be transformed into “christs,” that we may live in Christ and Christ in us.⁷

Children in the Lord:

B. The Peace of our Hearts and the Peace of the World

Our reference to global peace, on this day, is very timely, for this peace has been shaken by recent events in world history, and it does not appear that it will be restored in the near future.

But let us not forget that the peace of the world, and our obligation to bring it about, has its starting-point in our personal transformation and transfiguration in Christ.

Let our hearts be at peace first, and then the world will be at peace; first let there be within us the “Appearing” and “Advent” of the Lord, and then efforts to make peace:

“He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them,” says our Savior, “he it is that loveth Me; and he that loveth Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him.”⁸

It is then that we are truly Christ-bearers, peace-bearers, and peacemakers; it is then that the Beatification of our Lord is fulfilled in us:

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.”⁹

Our inner peace in Christ, therefore, is the essential precondition for the peace and unity of the world, for as wholly genuine conveyers of Divine peace and as true friends of God, we will both draw to ourselves, and exude, the peace-bestowing mercy of His love.

“Be at peace within yourself,” Abba Isaac the Syrian quite pointedly tells us, “and Heaven and earth will be at peace.”¹⁰

However, in order to reach the city of peace, we must walk along the path of humility.

“If you cherish peace of heart,” the Saints advise us, “strive to enter therein through the door of humility; for, there is no other way thereto than humility.”¹¹

Humble-mindedness, according to the Holy Fathers, “is the vesture of Divinity,” because “the Incarnate Word clothed Himself in it, and through it united Himself to us in our body,” “lest the creation be consumed by the sight of Him.”¹²

Beloved children in the Lord:

C. Do We Long for the Advent of Our Lord?

When our Lord humbled Himself and became flesh, “taking upon Himself the form of a servant,”¹³ He proclaimed the joyous message of peace: “He came and preached peace.”¹⁴

Henceforth, He “comes” abidingly, “making Himself manifest,” and granting His Peace to all who love and await His glorious “Advent”: “Unto all them also that love His Appearing.”¹⁵

Let each one of us ask himself today: Do we love, and long for, the “blessed hope and the glorious Appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ”?¹⁶ Do we make our hearts ready for His visitation and “Appearing”?

And “who is he that loves the Appearing of Christ?” ask the Saints of our Church.

“It is that Christian who suffers hardship for the Faith and for the commandments of Christ; it is he that performs deeds worthy of the Appearing of Christ; it is he that has love for his neighbor, gives alms, and possesses prudence, humility, patience, and all of the other virtues.”¹⁷

True Christians love and honor the first “Appearing” of our Savior Jesus Christ, because He sacrificed Himself “in order to gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.”¹⁸

Likewise, such ones love and long for the “Advent” of our Lord in their hearts, because they never forget that “the God of gods and Lord of lords created their souls to be His own abode and temple.”¹⁹

Finally, they love and await with profound joy the eschatological “brightness of His Coming”²⁰ and “His Kingdom,”²¹ since they will then hear the voice of the Lamb Who was slain, “Behold, I make all things new,”²² and will inherit “new heavens and a new earth,”²³ glorifying Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, unto the ages of ages. Amen!

Holy Nativity of our Savior Jesus Christ, 2003

Your Intercessor Before the Incarnate Lord

† Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Fili

President of the Holy Synod in Resistance

Notes

1. II Corinthians 13:11.
2. II Corinthians 1:3.
3. II St. Timothy 1:10.
4. Ephesians 2:7, 4.
5. See note 3.

6. Revelation 1:8.
7. Cf. Galatians 2:20.
8. St. John 14:21.
9. St. Matthew 5:9.
10. Abba Isaac the Syrian, Discourse 30.
11. St. Nicodemos the Hagiorite, Ἀόρατος Πόλεμος [*Unseen Warfare*], Part II, ch. 17.
12. Abba Isaac the Syrian, Discourse 20.
13. Philippians 2:7.
14. Ephesians 2:17.
15. II St. Timothy 4:8.
16. St. Titus 2:13.
17. St. Nicodemos the Hagiorite, commentary on II St. Timothy 4:8.
18. St. John 11:52.
19. St. Nicodemos the Hagiorite, Ἀόρατος Πόλεμος, Part II, ch. 18.
20. II Thessalonians 2:8.
21. II St. Timothy 4:1.
22. Revelation 21:5.
23. II St. Peter 3:13.