

## ENCYCLICAL

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

# Our Archetype and Preservation From Idols

## *The establishment of Christ in our hearts*

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, Children in the Lord:

### *a) The “introduction of the Firstborn into the world”<sup>1</sup>*

**L**et us on this day unhesitatingly adore our Savior, Jesus Christ, with sacred awe and profound gratitude, seeing that He has come to be under such humble circumstances.

**As God**, He is “in the bosom of the Father”;<sup>2</sup> as God-Man, He rests in the arms of His Immaculate Mother.

**He is** at once the “*Firstborn*”<sup>3</sup> and the “*Only-Begotten*,”<sup>4</sup> Who was begotten of the Father before all creation; He is the “*beginning of the creation of God*,”<sup>5</sup> the unoriginate and creative cause and principle of the visible and invisible creation; He is the “*First and the Last*,”<sup>6</sup> Who is preëternally first of all things and comprehends all things in His infinite existence and presence.

**Today**, then, the creation justly dances for joy and keeps festival, for the greatest and most sublime Mystery of the Incarnate Economy is revealed—that which was “foreordained before the foundation of the world”:<sup>7</sup> today “the Firstborn is brought into the world,”<sup>8</sup> in accordance with the preëternal counsel of God; today our *Archetype* is born, the *true Man*, the *God-Man*.



**Rightly** and very aptly is this great day of the Nativity of Christ called by the Holy Fathers of our Church the “*Birthday of humanity*,”<sup>9</sup> for it is from henceforth that authentic human beings have been born.

**Man is** now able to achieve his full potential, that is, to become Christlike, since through the Church he is united with the God-Man Christ and becomes God by Grace.

Children in the Lord:

**b) *The “blessed” and “predestined end”***<sup>10</sup>

**All of** those Christians who are found in the arena of purification and illumination mystically hear the very familiar voice of the Father resounding on this day from Heaven: “*This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased.*”<sup>11</sup>

**This voice**, which will be heard both at the Baptism and at the Transfiguration, is the most joyous of all those voices ever heard from Heaven.

**The unoriginate** Father “*is well pleased*”! This demonstrates that the “*Firstborn*” has become perfect man by the “*goodwill*,” that is, the *primary* and *antecedent will* of the Father, which flows from His boundless goodness and love and from His intense desire to benefit us.

**Precisely** because the Mystery of the Incarnate Economy of the Son was the antecedent will of the Father, the Saints teach us that “*it was for this reason both foreknown and foreordained prior to the foreknowledge and foreordination of all other creatures, both noetic and sensible*”; and furthermore, “*all of the other creatures were both foreknown and foreordained [by the Father] to be created for the sake of the great Mystery of the Incarnation of His beloved Son.*”<sup>12</sup>

**The Mystery** of the Incarnate Economy is, therefore, the “*beginning and middle and end of all creatures, the noetic, the sensible, and those in between.*”<sup>13</sup> It is the “*blessed*” and “*foreordained end*,” “*the foreordained Divine purpose of the origin of existing things*,”

with “*the innermost depth of the Father’s goodness*” as its primary motive.<sup>14</sup>

**Justly**, then, I repeat, does the whole of creation dance for joy and keep festival today, for the Incarnation of the Word, the union of Divine and human nature in the supremely Divine Hypostasis of the “*Firstborn*” and “*Only-Begotten*,” became the principle and cause of all created things to be foreknown, foreordained, and created. God intermediately bestowed upon the Angels the ability to repel and be unmoved by evil; but upon men He bestowed them an *Archetype*, through Whom they are renewed and made Christlike. The Mystery of the Incarnation is “*the final end of all things, higher than which there is nothing*,” because “*it entailed perfection, deification, glory, and blessedness for the Angels, for mankind, and for the whole of creation*,” and also because this “*was the union of the Creator and His creatures, and the glory of the unoriginate Father, Who was glorified, not through mere creatures, but through Him Who is His Son and Word according to essence, Who clothed Himself in human nature*.”<sup>15</sup>

Beloved children in the Lord:

c) “*Little children, keep yourselves from idols*”<sup>16</sup>

**Our most** holy Church constantly reminds us, and especially on this day, of the great and salvific truth, that “*Adam was once deceived, and, though he desired to become God, he received not his desire; God becometh man, that He may make Adam God*.”<sup>17</sup>

**Adam** temporarily thwarted God’s *plan* for the deification of man, because, deceived by Satan, he trusted in himself; he decided for himself the manner and the path of his perfection and deification.

**However**, this self-sufficiency, self-esteem, self-confidence, and faith in his own supposed power inaugurated the enshrinement and establishment in his heart of innumerable *idols*.

**Thus, man**, instead of worshipping his God and Creator, worships the idols of his own passions; and, what is most dreadful

and abominable of all, he worships himself; that is, he makes an idol of himself!

**Unfortunately**, this occurs even with Christians, in spite of the fact that, through Holy Baptism, they have renounced Satan and his idols; the danger and temptation of *idolatry* is ever present and insinuates itself into our hearts.

**Therefore**, the Holy Apostle John the Evangelist draws our attention to this and lovingly exhorts us: “*Little children, keep yourselves from idols.*”<sup>18</sup>

**This danger** posed by *idols* should not be underestimated, because—as the Saints assure us—“*every passionate man has an idol in his soul, stamped with that passion by which he is conquered and dominated, and this he adores and worships as his God: that thing to which one’s heart is bound and on which his desire is focused, that is his God.*”<sup>19</sup>

**The sad** thing is that, whereas our *heart* ought to be a *dwell-ing-place*<sup>20</sup> and throne of Christ, and whereas our *mind* ought to be the “*mind of Christ,*”<sup>21</sup> in practice the opposite usually happens: the passions of the mind, the evil thoughts and passionate idols of our imagination, as “*abominations of desolation standing in the holy place,*”<sup>22</sup> displace God and expel purity and sanctity from our souls.

**Indeed**, then, how are we to “keep ourselves from [these] idols”<sup>23</sup> so as to have only our *Archetype*, the God-Man, Who will grant us Grace and deification, constantly “enshrined and established” in our hearts?

**What is** needed, the Saints tell us, is an endless inward and outward struggle: the guarding of the senses, the mind, and the heart; vigilance and alertness; unceasing self-criticism, self-reproach, and repentance; continual communion of the Immaculate Mysteries; steadfast progress in carrying the cross of asceticism, with a contrite and humbled heart.

**And finally**, the Neptic Fathers teach us, “*whoever yearns to be freed effortlessly from the passionate idols of sin,*” which the demons have set up in the soul through impassioned thoughts, “let him become accustomed to bringing his mind into his heart and to saying

*silently within himself this saving prayer: 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me!'"*<sup>24</sup>

**This noetic** activity, when it becomes ingrained and firmly established within us, cleanses, purifies, and illumines our minds and hearts in such a way that we become henceforth *holy temples of God*, of the Father Who loves mankind, of the Incarnate Word, and of the Comforting Spirit, the one sovereign Godhead in Trinity, unto Whom are due all glory and thanksgiving, unto the ages of ages. Amen!

## The Holy Nativity of our Savior Jesus Christ, 2005

Your intercessor before the Incarnate Lord,

† *Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Fili,  
President of the Holy Synod in Resistance*

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### Notes

1. Cf. Hebrews 1:6.
2. St. John 1:18.
3. See note 1.
4. St. John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18.
5. Revelation 3:14.
6. Revelation 2:8.
7. I St. Peter 1:20.
8. Hebrews 1:6.
9. St. Basil the Great, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XXXI, col. 1473A.
10. St. Maximos the Confessor, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XC, col. 621A.
11. II St. Peter 1:17.
12. St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite, "Interpretation of II St. Peter 1:17."
13. See note 12.
14. See note 10.
15. See note 12.
16. I St. John 5:21.
17. Feast of the Annunciation, *Doxastikon* at the Praises.
18. See note 16.
19. St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite, "Interpretation of I St. John 5:21," with reference to St. Makarios the Great.
20. Cf. Ephesians 3:17.

21. I Corinthians 2:16.

22. Cf. St. Matthew 24:15; St. Mark 13:14.

- For a very beautiful tropological interpretation of this subject by St. Maximos the Confessor, see his *Second Century on Love*, §31.

23. See note 16.

24. See note 19.