

ENCYCLICAL

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

The Entry of the Word into the World Through the One and Only Gate

*The World Was Created for the Sake of the Theotokos and
She for the Sake of the God-Man*

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

a. The "dim figures" have past

EXULT and “rejoice with joy unspeakable and glorious”¹ Leap up with gladness, glorify with sincerity and worship with all reverence Christ the Incarnate God, with the Father and the Holy Spirit!

On this day, Orthodox Christians behold the passing and the fulfillment of the “**dim figures**”² of the prophecies and the “**shadows**”³ of the Old Testament.

Concerning the great Mysteries of our salvation in Christ, as the Holy Apostle Peter says, “**the Prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the Grace that should come unto you**”;⁴ however, these preternatural Mysteries, “which the Angels desire to peruse”⁵ and which figuratively indicated the Mystery of the Incarnate Economy, were accomplished and have been revealed in our days; already “**the shadow of the Law hath passed away with the coming of Grace.**”⁶

In those Divinely inspired Scriptures, of sacred composition, the particulars of the Incarnation of the Word of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary were spoken of spiritually and figuratively.

Prefigurative thereof were the “entry of the Firstborn into the world”⁷ through the “**Gate of the Sanctuary that looketh eastward,**”⁸ and also the entry of man into Heaven through the “**Gate of Heaven.**”⁹



Beloved children in the Lord:

b. "The Holy Trinity rejoiced exceedingly"

OUR SAINTS teach that **“the Holy Trinity most rightly rejoiced and rejoiced exceedingly before time began, having foreknowledge of the Ever-Virgin Mary in His Divine Mind.”**¹⁰

In truth, the Immaculate Maiden was foreordained by God “in accordance with His preëternal good will,” that is, **“in accordance with His antecedent and primary will,”** to become, as it were, **“another, second world, incomparably superior to the entire noetic and sensible world and alone sufficient to glorify the Creator eternally, by virtue of the beauty and variety of its spiritual endowments, more than the whole of the created universe.”**¹¹

From this it follows that the noetic and sensible world **“was created for the sake of our Lady, the *Theotokos*,”** and that our Lady, the *Theotokos*, **“was created for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ,”** so that **“the ancient counsel and original purpose of God”**¹² might be fulfilled, that **“all things might be gathered together in Christ”**¹³ and that **“creation”** might be united **“with the Creator.”**¹⁴

The entry of the **“Great Priest,”**¹⁵ Christ, the Uncreated King, into the created world, was of necessity made through a ***Royal Gate***; and this ***Gate***, fit for God, was the Immaculate *Theotokos*. **“This Gate shall be shut,”** said the Lord to the Holy Prophet Ezekiel; **“it shall not be opened, and no man shall pass through it, for the Lord, the God of Israel, shall enter in by it, and it shall be shut.”**¹⁶

So it was that, **before time began,** the Holy Trinity “rejoiced and rejoiced exceedingly” over the Ever-Virgin *Theotokos*, for He foresaw this ***Gate***, through Which the Uncreated One would enter the creation; and so it is that **now,** the People of God, Who bear the Name of Christ, rejoice and rejoice exceedingly whenever they hymn and magnify Mary, the Child of God, since She, as the **“boundary between created and Uncreated nature,”**¹⁷ is the ***Gate*** through Which created humanity enters into communion with Uncreated Divinity; and, as St. Gregory Palamas says, **“if any come to God, it is but through Her and the Mediator born from Her.”**¹⁸

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Christ-loving children, beloved of God:

c. "The Gate of Salvation"

TODAY, the sacred hymnographer, Cosmas of Jerusalem, exhorts us: **“Christ is on earth, be ye exalted”!**¹⁹ And our Lady, the Virgin Mother, aids us in exalting ourselves from earthly things, “minding things on high, and upborne on the wings of *praxis* and spiritual vision.”²⁰

The Immaculate Maiden conveys us upwards, mindful of the soteriological truth that She is the **“Gate of Heaven”**;²¹ and this truth impels us to self-criticism, to exaltation through humility.

Alas, do we knock at the *Gate* of the *Theotokos* continually and consistently, striving, through deeds of humility, love, and purity, for our purification, illumination, and deification?

Do we unceasingly seek Her invincible protection during our laborious journey from sin and passionateness, which are contrary to nature, to the illuminative virtues, which are in accordance with nature, and, beyond these, to holiness, which is above nature?

Do we keep in mind that She is our **“Instructress”**²² in the *Prayer of the Heart*, whereby we enter into the **“closet”**²³ of our soul and discover the **“Kingdom of Heaven within us”**?²⁴

Whatever may be, let us be exalted today! And let us remain forever uplifted, pondering on the *Great Mystery* of the Most Blessed *Theotokos*: She is the **One and Only Gate**, **“through Which the Word alone passed,”**²⁵ at His **“Entry into the World”**;²⁶ She is the **“Gate of Salvation,”**²⁷ over Which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the All-Holy Trinity, preëternally “rejoiced and rejoiced exceedingly.” Unto Him are due all glory, worship, and thanksgiving!

The Holy Nativity of our Savior Jesus Christ, 2006

Your intercessor before the Incarnate Lord,

† *Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Fili,*

First Hierarch of the Holy Synod in Resistance

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1. Cf. I St. Peter 1:8.
 2. St. John of Damascus, Canon for the Feast of the Nativity of Christ, Ode 9, *Troparion* 1.
 3. See note 2.
 4. I St. Peter 1:10.
 5. I St. Peter 1:12.
 6. *Parakletike*, Second Tone, Saturday Vespers, *Doxastikon* at “Lord, I have cried.”
 7. Cf. Hebrews 1:6.
 8. Cf. Ezekiel 44:1.
 9. Cf. Genesis 28:17.
 10. St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite, *Άόρατος Πόλεμος* [*Unseen Warfare*], Part I, ch. 49 (Volos: Ekdoseis S. Schoina, 1965), pp. 118-119, note.
 11. See note 10.
 12. See note 10.
 13. Ephesians 1:10.
 14. See note 10.
 15. Feast of the Nativity of the *Theotokos*, September 8, *Doxastikon* at the Praises.
 16. Ezekiel 44:2.
 17. St. Gregory Palamas, “Homily LIII, ‘On the Entrance of the Theotokos,’” §37, in *Έργα* [*Works*], *Έλληνες Πατέρες τής Έκκλησίας* (Thessaloniki: Paterikai Ekdoseis “Gregorios ho Palamas,” 1986), Vol. XI, p. 308.
 18. See note 17.
 19. St. Cosmas of Maiouma, Canon for the Feast of the Nativity of Christ, Ode 1, *Heirmos*.
 20. Cf. St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite, *Έορτοδρόμιον* [*Festal Sermonary*] (Venice: 1836), p. 67.
 21. Cf. Genesis 28:17.
 22. **St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite**, *Κήπος Χαρίτων* [*Garden of Graces*] (Thessaloniki: Ekdoseis B. Regopoulou, 1979), p. 215b.
 23. Cf. St. Matthew 6:6.
 24. Cf. St. Luke 17:21.
 25. **St. Joseph the Hymnographer**, Canon of the *Akathistos* Hymn, Ode 3, *Troparion* 4.
 26. Cf. Hebrews 1:6.
 27. *Χαιρετισμοὶ* [*Salutations*] of the *Theotokos*, *Stasis* IV, *Oikos* T.