

ENCYCLICAL

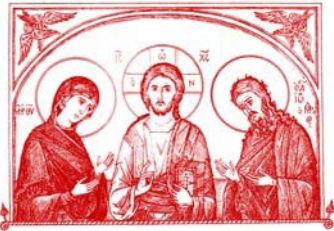
for the Feast of the Nativity of Christ our Savior

“Come Forth and Show Yourself a Man!”
The Incarnation and the Glory of Man

My Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

The Saints urge us to *reflect* prayerfully and with a heart full of gratitude on the Great Mystery of the Incarnation of God.

“Ponder,” says St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite, “ponder, brother, on the lofty height to which you have been exalted through the Divine Incarnation.”¹



The Saint goes on to quote the God-chosen Apostle Paul, who writes to the Ephesians: [Christ] “ascended up on high,” “far above all heavens,” “that he might fill all things,” and “led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.”²

Our Incarnate and Crucified Savior, when He ascended on high to Heaven after His Resurrection and Ascension, took sin, death, and the Devil into captivity and annihilated them, filling all things with His Theanthropic Presence and gifts and bestowing upon men the charisms of the Holy Spirit.

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My Christ-loving Brothers and Sisters:

One of these gifts, one of these charisms—assuredly the highest—is that we now belong to the family of God, to the “holy nobility

¹ St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite, *Γυμνάσματα Πνευματικά* (Spiritual exercises) (Thessalonica: 1971), p. 145a.

² Cf. Ephesians 4:8, 10.

of God,”³ as the Saints characterize it; we are “children of God,” “heirs of God,” and “joint-heirs with Christ.”⁴

This adoption into Divine sonship allows us to address God with familiarity as “*Our Father*”;⁵ all Christians, according to the Divine Chrysostomos, have in common been endowed with “a nobility”⁶ and also a calling:

“Be ye therefore imitators of God, as dear children.”⁷

It is precisely here, through this charism and calling, that the Glory of Man is revealed to us still more profoundly: he has been created and recreated in such a way as to have the potential to become a “partaker of the Divine nature.”⁸

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Light-Wrought children of the Church:

The dividing line between the Church and the world is Holiness, as the “supreme Christian ideal,”⁹ according to the Saints.

This potential of our “sanctification,” without which “no man shall see the Lord,”¹⁰ was given to us from the moment that Christ “communicated His Divinity to human nature”¹¹ in the Incarnation; when the “infinitely powerful goodness of Divine frailty”¹² was poured out upon our erstwhile lowly and coarse nature; when our Lord “emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant,”¹³ becoming an *Émigré* of love,

³ St. Nicholas (Velimirović), “The Mystery of the Laying On of Hands,” in *Πάτερ ἡμῶν*, trans. Petros Botses (Athens: 2003), p. 88.

⁴ Romans 8:16-17.

⁵ Cf. St. Matthew 6:9: “Our Father.”

⁶ St. John Chrysostomos, “Homily XIX on St. Matthew,” *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LVII, col. 279.

⁷ Ephesians 5:1.

⁸ Cf. II St. Peter 1:4.

⁹ St. Nicholas, *Πάτερ ἡμῶν*, p. 87.

¹⁰ Hebrews 12:14.

¹¹ St. Nicodemos, *Γυμνάσματα Πνευματικά*, p. 147a, §3.

¹² Cf. St. Dionysios the Areopagite, *On the Divine Names*, ch. III, §2, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. III, col. 681D.

¹³ Philippians 2:7.

a “Poor” and “Pregnable God,”¹⁴ in order that “we might partake of His fullness,”¹⁵ become recipients of Uncreated Grace, and be filled with the “gifts” of the Holy Spirit.

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Beloved children and brethren in the Lord:

Especially today, on this great Feast of the Lord, the Nativity of Christ, the Divine Chrysostomos, with the Christocentric avidity for man that distinguishes him, addresses an exhortation to us:

“Come forth and show yourself a man!” “This I say, and will not cease from saying: Come forth and show yourself a man!”¹⁶

How? In what way are we to become truly Men: god-men by Grace?

It is when we forget not our “supreme Christian ideal,” namely our “sanctification”; when we cultivate the charism of becoming “imitators of God”¹⁷ and imitators of Christ through the divinizing virtues and through the Immaculate Mysteries; and especially when we “walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us.”¹⁸

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My Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Invoking upon you the blessings of our much-revered Elder, Metropolitan Cyprian, and the intercessions of the Most Blessed Theotokos, let us place a seal on our sacred musings on the Divine Incarnation with yet another exhortation from the Divine Chrysostomos:

“Be a devotee of love! For through this were you saved, through

¹⁴ Metropolitan Anthony Bloom, *Ὁ Ἐνῶλωτος Θεός* [The pregnable God] (Athens: Ekdoseis En plo, 2008).

¹⁵ Cf. St. Gregory the Theologian, “Oration XXXVIII, ‘On the Theophany [Nativity],” §13, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XXXVI, col. 325C.

¹⁶ St. John Chrysostomos, “On the Saying of the Prophet David, ‘Be Not Afraid When a Man Is Made Rich,’” *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LV, col. 500.

¹⁷ Ephesians 5:1.

¹⁸ Ephesians 5:2.

this have you become a son,”¹⁹ through this will you become a god by Grace and a partaker of the Divine nature, so that the Father might be glorified through the Son, in the Holy Spirit, unto the ages of ages. Amen.

+ The Holy Nativity of Our Savior Jesus Christ, 2010

Your humble intercessor
before our Incarnate Lord,
† Bishop Cyprian of Oreoi,
*Acting President
of the Holy Synod in Resistance*

N.B.: The Reverend Parish Priests are asked to read the present Encyclical immediately after the Holy Gospel for the Divine Liturgy of Nativity.

¹⁹ St. John Chrysostomos, “Homily XVII on Ephesians,” *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LXII, col. 117.