

## ENCYCLICAL

for the Feast of the Nativity of our Savior Christ

Protocol No. 1836

# “Christ is on Earth, Be Ye Exalted”

## Our Progenitor • the New Beginning • Our Brother

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

The heartening and hopeful exhortation of our Holy Mother the Church, more timely than ever before, is heard yet again today “as the voice of many waters”:

“Christ is on earth, be ye exalted!”

Christ, our Lord and God, the Only-Begotten Son and Word of God, is already on earth and in our midst.

The Uncreated One has, through the Theotokos and with the coöperation of the Holy Spirit, assumed created, human nature; He has become Man that we might become gods by Grace.

Divine Love has led Him to an “exodus” out of Himself, so as to find the one that was lost, to embrace him tenderly in an eternal union, and lead him to God the Father. He has come into the world to offer Himself as a Blameless Lamb to His Father.

He has become flesh, He has become incarnate so as to become the Progenitor of a New People, an Elect Nation that is Holy, Royal, Priestly, and Prophetic: the Christian race; those people, that is, who have been baptized in the Name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit—in the Name of the Holy Trinity.

Today, then, a New Beginning is celebrated; today, we celebrate our participation in this New Beginning, which, in essence, is Christ our Savior Himself; today, we are called upon to make a new beginning, to restore our Mysteriological relationship with Christ our God, and to be renewed in the Light and the Glory of the Holy Trinity.

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But why, my beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, is this restoration, this renewal, required of us Orthodox Christians?

There are three basic reasons, which demonstrate with perfect clarity the need for this renewal:

First, each of the faithful personally, but also all together collectively, must confess with sincerity and repentance that we are betraying—albeit unknowingly or unconsciously—our sanctified and priestly being, our charismatic potential, and our royal and prophetic nature.

Secondly, we are responsible and culpable for the increasingly dominant social notion of abandoning our brother; the “theology” of a Christian understanding of one’s neighbor, concern for others, and self-sacrifice on behalf of our brother have all taken a peripheral place in our so-called Christian conscience.

Thirdly, we are deeply guilty, if simply by our passivity and inertia before the chilling phenomenon of the extreme desecration—and this at a collective level—of the sanctity of the person, the image of God, in our social surroundings.

We can, on this day, more profoundly understand this three-fold responsibility of ours when we reflect that, as St. Nicholas Cabasilas so beautifully and profoundly writes, “He,” Christ, “bowed down to earth and found His Image.”

God was made flesh and continues, in the Divine Liturgy, to be made flesh, that we might be able to behold His Divine Form in every Image of Him, in every person; that we might experience the Presence of Christ in our lives and recognize this Presence in every other person as well, in our every brother and sister, in our every fellow human being.

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Given that we are weighed down by this three-fold guilt, to what extent, then, my brothers and sisters, can the exhortation of the holy hymnographer “be ye exalted!” hold forth for each one of us?

If we are not restored and renewed, just how, alas, can we be spiritually “exalted” with glorification and thanksgiving? And how can we raise up the whole world with us to the level of a New Beginning, to the Mystery of a New Creation, to the communion of the Holy Trinity?

He “bowed down” to find His image. Do we “bow down” with love and seek His image in the person of our brother?

He gave us the charism to behold Him in the person of our neighbor. But do we behold Him, with awe, profound respect, and self-sacrificial concern, in the person of our brother?

It is truly a great tragedy to see, with ever-widening affirmation, that, in general, Christians—and we are not speaking, here, of those indifferent to the Faith, but rather of those who live close to the Church—have put out of their mind the Image of God—their brothers and sisters; they have enveloped themselves in the narrow confines of their personal affairs and problems; they have forgotten about self-sacrificial love—love that “costs”; they do not offer their lives one for another; they deny, in practice, the confession of the Holy Trinity, since they do not live in the manner of the Trinity, that is, in a spirit of reciprocity and mutual love.

“When, yet, we do not live one for another, we are already dead,” as a renowned contemporary Greek poet writes.

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Before the Divine cradle in Bethlehem, my brothers and sisters in Christ, let us submit ourselves today to some frank self-criticism.

Perhaps we do not live one for another? Maybe we are already dead? Maybe we are not Temples of the Holy Spirit? Maybe we have not made our lives a Liturgy: a triune Liturgy of love, at which God, we, and our brother concelebrate; a Liturgy which, through love and in love, sanctifies the world and banishes the demonic and profane elements of the world?

By answering these questions in all sincerity, I believe that we will be substantially sustained, not only in celebrating the New Beginning inaugurated by the Incarnate God, but also in participating resolutely in this New Beginning and, thereby, experiencing in our lives, from this moment onward, unceasing renewal amid the Light and the Glory of the Holy Trinity.

Then it is that we will truly be “exalted”; then, we will sing with constancy from the heart:

“Christ is born, give ye glory.  
Christ is come from Heaven, receive ye Him.  
Christ is on earth, be ye exalted!”

May the protection of the All-Holy Mother of God and the benediction of our Elder and Father, Metropolitan Cyprian, of blessed memory, be ever with us, for our strengthening, guidance, and consolation. Amen!

† The Holy Nativity of Our Savior Jesus Christ, 2013

Your humble intercessor before our Incarnate Lord,  
† Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Phyle,  
President of the  
Holy Synod in Resistance

