



Church of the **G**enuine **O**rthodox **C**hristians of **G**reece
The **H**oly **S**ynod

Protocol no. 2665

To be read in Church on the
Feast of the Nativity

NATIVITY MESSAGE for 2017

*“Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace,
good will among men”*

Beloved Fathers and Brethren; beloved children in the Lord:

When “the fullness of time” (Galatians 4:4), the suitable time, came, the Only-Begotten Son and Word of God the Father was made flesh and entered into our world; He became man for our sake, in order to deliver us from eternal perdition and to bestow upon us salvation, Divine glory, adoption into sonship, and the Heavenly Kingdom. He displayed unfathomable condescension toward the human race, ailing in both soul and body. He was made man from a woman, the All-Holy Virgin Mary, the Ever-Virgin *Theotokos*, as the Prophet Isaiah had foreseen.



His Incarnation, which brings joy and salvation to the world and which divided history into two epochs, that before and that after Christ, is the Mystery of Mysteries, wholly incomprehensible not only to us men, but even to the Holy Angels.

The Infinite God took on boundaries; He Who cannot be confined by anything is confined in a virginal womb; He Whom the Heavens cannot contain is contained in the womb of a woman; He Who is without beginning took on a beginning; He Who is timeless and eternal entered into the relativity of time; He Who is almighty became a weak Infant, capable of shedding tears; He Who is not in need of anything entered into a state of neediness and clothed human nature with His Divine Person in all of its needs, and even the lowliest, save for sin; He Who is wealthy became poor and was born in a manger in a cave, in Bethlehem of Judæa; He was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a

manger of dumb animals; He Who is replete with Glory humbled Himself, diminishing and abasing Himself by taking on the form of a servant, yet without ceasing, even for a moment, to be the God of all, enthroned together with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

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Why this humbleness? “For His great love, wherewith He loved us” (Ephesians 2:4), the Apostle Paul affirms. He humbled Himself so much, for He loved us with unbounded, unconditional love, desiring to save us. *Humility is love put into practice.* And indeed, He loved us while we were His enemies and not His friends. This is because God is love (I St. John 4:8). He could not bear to behold His creation fallen, tyrannized, and tormented unto ages of ages. It is for this reason that He humbles Himself so much, that He might suffer on our behalf and deliver us from sin, death, and the Devil, in order to make manifest the “good will” of God, His “antecedent Will,” His primordial Counsel, His good and gracious will toward us. It is for this reason also that the celestial army of the Holy Angels chanted jubilantly and joyously on the night of the Nativity of Christ our Savior in the Cave of Bethlehem: “Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace, good will among men” (St. Luke 2:14).

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The condescension of our Savior Jesus Christ, which illumined the darkness, warmed the bitter cold, bringing peace and reconciliation to those in a state of rebellion, exhorting us to enter devoutly into His Divine Mystery; this condescension exercises a strong attraction on us to ascend to a Divine encounter with Him Who descended to us and Who comes down at every Divine Liturgy by way of His precious Gifts; and it bids us urgently to conform and assimilate ourselves to the Divine majesty of His humility and love, so that we might serve our neighbor in whatever station His Providence has placed us.

It is He Who left us with His Peace and Who bestows it upon us; He is our Peace, the Reconciler and Peacemaker. He it is Who has reconciled us to God and the Angels, to mankind, and to our very selves, amid the Light of Divine knowledge and true piety. He desires and awaits from all of us, His faithful—from all Orthodox Christians—that we should not rest content solely with our lofty and honorable name and identity, but should demonstrate in practice that we abide in the blessed state of peace and reconciliation with Him, as also with all other people and our inner self.

Such demands constant attention and vigilance, for there ever lurks the danger that we either err with regard to a pious attitude towards the Truth of the Faith, or fall away from the blessed state of reconciliation and peace and subjugate ourselves to the passions that war against us, and thus come under the

sway of the Evil One, becoming once again hostile to God and to our neighbor.

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Beloved Fathers and Brethren in Christ:

May we not forfeit the wealth of Divine bounties; may we not fall away from Divine love and peace; may we not exchange heavenly things for earthly things, things incorruptible for things corruptible, things true and eternal for things false and transient! Rather, in true repentance, with Orthodox faith and conscience uncondemned, may we enjoy whatsoever God has prepared for those who love Him. Amen!

Nativity of Christ, 2017

With paternal best wishes and blessing of
† Archbishop Kallinikos of Athens
and the Members of the Holy Synod