



■ † The radiant day of the Nativity of Christ

**“Christ is Born, Give ye Glory!”\***

**G**lory to Thee, O Lord! Once again we greet the awaited radiant days of the Nativity of Christ.

Let us be glad and rejoice. In order to raise our festivities to a higher level in these days, the Holy Church has intentionally instituted a fast before them—a certain amount of constraint, so that as we enter the festive period we might feel as though we were coming out into freedom.

Nevertheless, the Church in no way desires that we give ourselves over to mere sensual delights and fleshly pleasures. Since the Church has from olden times called these days *sviatki* ("holy days"), they require that our very rejoicing on these days be holy, as they are holy.

So that those who rejoice might not forget themselves, the Church has placed a short hymn upon our lips to glorify the newborn Christ, by which the flesh is settled down and the soul is uplifted, showing the proper occupations for these days:

“Christ is born, give ye glory,” and the rest.

***Glorify Christ; glorify Him,*** so that by this doxology your heart and soul might delight, and thereby silence any urge for various other deeds and occupations that might promise some kind of pleasure.

***Glorify Christ:*** this does not mean that you have to compose



lengthy songs of praise to Christ—no. But if when contemplating or hearing about the birth of Christ the Savior, you involuntarily cry out from the depths of your soul, “Glory to Thee, O Lord, that Christ is born!”—this is sufficient.

This will be a quiet hymn of the heart, which will nevertheless pass through to heaven and enter in to God Himself. Repeat a little more clearly to yourself what the Lord has wrought for us, and you will see how natural this exclamation now is.

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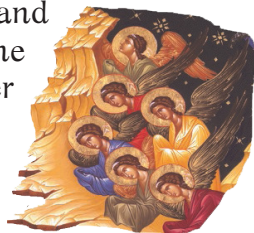
**So** that this might be easier for us, we shall compare it to the following incident:

- **A king promises** freedom to a man who is imprisoned in a dungeon and bound with fetters. The prisoner waits a day, then another, then months, and years. He sees no fulfillment of the promise, but does not lose hope, and believes in the king's words. Finally, he sees signs that it is coming soon. His attention increases—he hears a noise; someone is approaching with cheerful words. Now the locks fall and the liberator enters. “**Glory to Thee, O Lord!**” the prisoner involuntarily cries. “The end of my imprisonment has arrived, and soon I will see God's light!”

- **Or another incident:** A sick man is covered with wounds and paralyzed in all his members. He has tried every kind of medicine and has changed doctors many times. His endurance is at an end, and he is ready to give himself over to despair. He is told, “There is one more very skilled doctor, who heals everyone from those very illnesses that you have. We have asked him to come, and he has promised to do so.” The patient believes this, hope springs up in him, and he waits for the promised one.... One hour passes, then another, and anxiety again begins to torment his soul. Finally, at evening, someone arrives.... The door opens, and the desired visitor enters. “**Glory to Thee, O Lord!**” the sick man shouts.

- **Here is another** example: A thundercloud hangs over the face of the earth, and it is covered with darkness. Thunder shakes the foundations of the mountains and lightening tears the sky from one end to the other. All are in fear, as if the end of the world had come. When the thunder passes and the sky clears, everyone breathes freely, saying, “**Glory to Thee, O Lord!**”

Bring these examples closer to yourself and you will see our whole history in them. The threatening clouds of God's wrath were over us. The Lord—the Peacemaker—has come, and has dispersed the cloud. We were covered with the wounds of sins and passions; the Healer of souls has come and healed us. We were bound by the fetters of slavery; the Liberator has come and released our fetters. Bring all of these examples closer to your heart and take them in with your senses, and you will not be able to refrain from exclaiming, “**Glory to Thee, O Lord, that Christ is born!**”



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**I will not** try to convey this joy to you with my words; it is inexpressible by any words. The work that was accomplished by the Lord Who is born touches each one of us.

Those who enter into communion with Him receive from Him freedom, healing, and peace; they possess all of this and taste of its sweetness. There is no reason to say, “Rejoice!” to those who experience this within themselves, for they cannot help but rejoice.

**But** to those who do not experience it, why say, “Rejoice”? They cannot rejoice. No matter how much you say, “Rejoice at your deliverance” to one bound hand and foot, he will not rejoice. Whence can the joy of healing come to one who is covered with the wounds of sin? How can one who is threatened by the thunder of God's wrath breathe freely?

You can only say to him, “Go to the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes in the manger, and seek deliverance by Him from all the evils that encompass you, for this Infant is Christ, the Savior of the world.”

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**I would** like to see everyone rejoicing with this very joy, and not wanting to know any other joys; **but not everything that comes from Israel is Israel.** (cf. Romans 9:6).

Now there will begin empty, wild merriment that inflames the passions. No matter how much you tell these people to calm down, they only shut their ears and pay no heed.

And they always bring these bright days of the Feast to such a point that the merciful Lord is compelled to turn His eyes

from us and say: “All of your solemnities are an abomination unto Me” (cf. Is. 1:13-14)!

**T**ruly, many of our social festivities are really pagan abominations; that is, some of them are brought to us straight from the pagan world, while others, though they appeared later in time, are penetrated with the spirit of paganism. And it is purposely contrived for such festivities to appear in great quantities during the Feasts of Nativity and Pascha.

**B**y getting caught up in them we give the prince of this world—our tormentor, the enemy of God—an excuse to say to God, “**Look what You've done for me with Your Nativity and Resurrection! They're all coming to me!**”

**B**ut let the words of the Fiftieth Psalm be repeated more often in the depth of our hearts: “That Thou mightest be justified in Thy words, and prevail when Thou art judged” (Ps. 50:4).



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(\*) St. Theophan the Recluse, *Thoughts for Each Day of the Year According to the Daily Church Readings from the Word of God*.