

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE  
OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX  
CHURCH OUTSIDE OF RUSSIA

**"Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in flesh"**

In these words St. Apostle Paul defines the essence of the greatest and unique event in the history of mankind which is celebrated now by the Orthodox Church as one of its greatest feasts: the Nativity of Christ. And what is shown in this apostolic definition is one of the principal features of that event – its mystery.

The great hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, the ever memorable Metropolitan of Moscow, Philaret, in his inspired "Homily on Good Friday" speaks of the incarnation of the Son of God in following terms: "The Divine is united with man, eternal with temporal, all-perfect with limited, uncreated with its creation existing of itself with insignificant". What a mystery! Who of men is able to understand that mystery what man can comprehend and embrace with its understanding the mystery to which reverently yield even the radiant and deep angelic minds? How, in what way two different natures - the nature of the unlimited and all-perfect God and the nature of man are united together in one Person~ in one Person of God-Man. incarnated from the Holy Spirit and the Most Blessed Virgin Mary!

But the good news of the mystery is told to men. In these radiant festal days the Church sings: "Thy Nativity, O Christ our God, has shone upon the world with the light of knowledge"... We are accustomed to those words! We know them from the days of our childhood, but don't they often slip only over the surface of our mind and thought without evoking neither deep interest, nor serious reflection. Did we give any due thought to their meaning and contents? However, they say that the incarnated Son of God brought to men the light of knowledge -- the light of true reason, the light of true understanding of life, its true sense, its aim. Our Lord Jesus Christ told His Disciples: "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see: for I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them". But, these words in some degree are related to us as well, because to us, the sons of the Church of the New Testament many things are open which were not known to the prophets and kings of the Old Testament. We know about God, the world and man much more than the righteous of the Old Testament could know, since according to Apostle John the Theologian "the darkness is past and the true light now shineth", -- and the true light is that **light of knowledge** which shines to the world in the Nativity of Christ.

O world - the blinded world, who lost its senses, entangled in its lust and errors! O, if at least only now your eyes would open, if you would see the light of knowledge and would understand what can help peace and your salvation. But, alas, it is hidden from your eyes because they are covered with an impervious shroud of vanity and passions. From the Manger of Bethlehem shines the Light of the knowledge of God, but you do not see it. The One who deigned to lie in a Manger is calling you: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest". However; you do not hear that salutary call and you follow your wise men of whom the Lord of God has said that having called themselves wise, they have lost their senses. And more

and more clearly one can notice in you the poisonous breath of the one who will appear before you as a full and dreadful impersonation of evil, sin and opposition to God...

Once upon a time, in the first days of Christianity. St. Apostle Peter warningly exhorted the nearly Christians: "Save yourselves from this untoward generation". Under the "untoward generation" the Apostle implied the unyielding enemies of Christianity among the Jewish nation as well as the whole pagan world which at that time became extremely vulgar and corrupted. By the time of the Nativity of Christ paganism was spiritually devastated and necrotic, having fully lost the true sense and understanding of life. Christianity brought to it the light of knowledge and gave it new strength. The pagan. world was spiritually regenerated by Christianity.

However, what we see now in our days is much worse and. more dangerous than what used to happen in ancient times. Now it is the Christian world that is being corrupted. It is the Christians who are corrupted, those whom the Saviour commanded to be **the light of the world**, in His stern warning: "ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt has lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted?"

Does this not happen now, in our presence, do not the present "Christians" turn into salt that has "lost his savor"? Therefore, you, the true son of the Church. beware of this dreadful spiritual disaster, - save yourself from this untoward generation! Here, in these radiant days, the Church is remembering the Birth of Christ and glorifies the born Saviour of the world. Hurry you, also, in your faith to the Manger of Bethlehem following the steps of the simple and pure in heart shepherds and the wise Magi who brought to that Manger all their wisdom and knowledge. Bring to the Divine Newlyborn your gifts: your Faith in Him, hope in Him, and love to Him and then the wonderful gloryfying hymn of the Angels will sound in your believing and devoted soul: "Glory to God in the highest~ and on earth peace, good will toward men"

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