



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

ARCHEPISCOPAL ENCYCLICAL

Prot. No. 290/2022

Archiepiscopal Encyclical on the Feast of Christmas

December 25, 2022

Behold, the virgin will conceive in the womb and bear a son, and they will call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted means “God is with us” (Gospel Reading of the Matins of Christmas).

Unto the Most Reverend and Right Reverend Hierarchs, Pious Priests and Deacons, the Monks and Nuns, Presidents and Members of Parish Councils, Honorable Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Members of Leadership 100, the Day and Afternoon Schools, Philoptochos Societies, the Youth, Greek Orthodox Organizations, and the entirety of the Christ-named Plenitude of the Holy Archdiocese of America:

Beloved Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Truly, God is with us! This is the great truth of Christmas for the entire human family — namely, that God has entered our history, so as to share it with us and redeem it in order to reveal His purposes in us. The Nativity in the flesh of our Savior in Bethlehem is a universally recognized event among all the world's cultures, even if such recognition sometimes misses the point. The holy days of celebrating the Birth of the Savior have become overrun with consumerist agendas, and many feel that the sanctity of the Feast has been diminished. But the holiness of the Nativity can never wane, because the Sun of Righteousness, Who has arisen upon the world, will never set again. Therefore, if a spirit of generosity is animated in this season even among unbelievers, we must give thanks. For the infusion of faith that we bring to the Feast of Christmas is a necessary tonic to the wave of gift-giving that oftentimes forgets the greatest Gift of all, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Indeed, my beloved Christians, it is from our faith in the One Who was Born in a Cave and Laid in a Manger for our salvation that the full meaning of Christmas is manifest. The Nativity in the little town of Bethlehem is perhaps the most generous act that has ever



happened in the history of the world. God humbled himself, as Saint Paul says in Philippians: "He emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, born in the likeness of humankind. Being found in human configuration, He humbled Himself, became obedient unto death, even death by the cross" (Phil. 2:7-8).

God emptied Himself so that we might be filled, made complete and whole. God offers Himself to the exhaustive experience of humankind (save sin), even unto death, so that we might have a path to life and, indeed, to life eternal. The gift of our Lord to creation reveals a bounty that humankind is still trying to comprehend. In fact, it is the ministry of the Church to demonstrate this tremendous love of God for all His creation in everything we say and do.

Therefore, my beloved Christians, let us cry out: "Χριστὸς Γεννᾶται! Δοξάσατε!
Christ is Born! Glorify Him!" with expectant hearts and open minds. Let us renew our generosity toward others in this season of giving, and accept the best that others can offer, inspired by their experience of the New-Born Babe of Bethlehem.

Χριστὸς Γεννᾶται! Δοξάσατε!

† ELPIDOPHOROS
Archbishop of America



ΙΕΡΑ ΑΡΧΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΗ ΑΜΕΡΙΚΗΣ

ΑΡΧΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΙΚΗ ΕΓΚΥΚΛΙΟΣ

Άριθμ. Πρωτ. 290/2022

Άρχιεπισκοπική Έγκυκλιος γιὰ τὴν ἔορτὴ τῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ Γεννήσεως.

25 Δεκεμβρίου 2022

Πρὸς τοὺς Σεβασμιωτάτους καὶ Θεοφιλεστάτους Αρχιερεῖς, τοὺς Εὐλαβεστάτους Ιερεῖς καὶ Διακόνους, τοὺς Μοναχοὺς καὶ τὶς Μοναχές, τοὺς Προέδρους καὶ τὰ Μέλη τῶν Κοινοτικῶν Συμβουλίων, τοὺς Ἐντιμολογιωτάτους Ἀρχοντες τοῦ Οἰκουμενικοῦ Πατριαρχείου, τὰ μέλη τῆς Ἡγεσίας τῶν 100, τὰ Ἡμερήσια καὶ Απογευματινὰ Σχολεῖα, τὶς Φιλοπτώχους Αδελφότητες, τὴ Νεολαία, τὶς Ἐλληνορθόδοξες Όργανώσεις καὶ όλοκληρο τὸ Χριστεπώνυμο πλήρωμα τῆς Ιερᾶς Αρχιεπισκοπῆς Αμερικῆς.

«Ἴδοὺ ἡ παρθένος ἐν γαστρὶ ἔξει καὶ τέξεται νίόν, καὶ καλέσουσι τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἐμμανονήλ,
ὅ ἔστι μεθερμηνεύμενον μεθ' ἡμῶν ὁ Θεός» (Ματθ. 1:23).

Προσφιλεῖς ἀδελφοὶ καὶ ἀδελφὲς ἐν Χριστῷ,

Πράγματι ό Θεὸς εἶναι μαζί μας! Ό Θεὸς γίνεται ἀνθρωπος σὰν ἐμᾶς καὶ εἰσέρχεται στὴν ίστορία τῆς ἀνθρωπότητας γιὰ νὰ φανερώσει τὸ θέλημα του! Αὐτὸ εἶναι τὸ μήνυμα τῶν Χριστουγέννων γιὰ ὅλη τὴν ἀνθρώπινη οἰκογένεια. Ή κατὰ σάρκα γέννηση τοῦ Σωτῆρος στὴ Βηθλεὲμ ἀποτελεῖ γεγονὸς παγκοσμίου ἐμβελείας, ποὺ ἀναγνωρίζεται ἀπὸ τοὺς πολιτισμοὺς σὲ ὅλα τὰ μήκη καὶ τὰ πλάτη τῆς γῆς, ἀν καὶ κάποιες φορὲς χάνεται τὸ ἀληθινὸ νόημα τῆς ἔορτῆς. Οἱ ἀγιες ἡμέρες τῶν Χριστουγέννων κατακλύζονται ἀπὸ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ καταναλωτισμοῦ, ὥστε κάποιοι νὰ θεωροῦν ὅτι ἡ ἵεροτητα τῆς ἔορτῆς παραθεωρεῖται. Όμως ἡ ἵεροτητα καὶ ἡ σημασία τῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ γεννήσεως δὲ χάνεται, οὕτε παραθεωρεῖται, διότι ὁ ἥλιος τῆς δικαιοσύνης, ὁ ὅποιος ἀνέτειλε μὲ τὴν ἀνάσταση τοῦ Κυρίου, δὲ δύει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα. Άλλὰ ἀς δοξάζουμε τὸ Θεὸ καὶ γιὰ αὐτὸ τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς προσφορᾶς καὶ τῆς ἀνταλλαγῆς δώρων ἀκόμη καὶ ἀνάμεσα στοὺς ἀνθρώπους ποὺ δὲν



πιστεύουν, γιατί αύτὸ ἀποτελεῖ ὑπόμνηση σὲ ὅλους μας γιὰ τὸ μεγάλο δῶρο τοῦ Θεοῦ πρὸς ἡμᾶς, ποὺ εἶναι τὸ θεῖο βρέφος, ὁ ἕιδος ὁ Κύριος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς Χριστός.

Αὐτὴ ἀκριβῶς εἶναι, ἀγαπητοί μου χριστιανοί, ἡ ἀλήθεια τῶν Χριστουγέννων, ὅτι ἡ σωτηρία μας ὀφείλεται στὸν «τεχθέντα ἐν τῷ σπηλαίῳ καὶ ἀνακλιθέντα ἐν τῇ φάτνῃ τῶν ἀλόγων!» Η «Χριστοῦ θεία γέννησις» στὴ μικρὴ πόλη τῆς Βηθλεὲμ ἀποτελεῖ τὴν ἀπόλυτη συγκατάβαση τοῦ Θεοῦ, παρεμβαίνοντας στὴν ίστορία τοῦ κόσμου. Ο Θεὸς κενώνει τὸν ἔαυτό του, ὅπως ὁ ἀπόστολος Παῦλος σημειώνει στὴν ἐπιστολὴν πρὸς τοὺς Φιλιππησίους: «ἀλλ’ ἔαυτὸν ἐκένωσε μορφὴν δούλου λαβών, ἐν ὅμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος, καὶ σχήματι εὑρεθεὶς ὡς ἀνθρωπὸς ἐταπείνωσεν ἔαυτὸν γενόμενος ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου, θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ» (Πρὸς Φιλιπ. 2:7-8).

Ο Θεὸς κενώνει ἔαυτόν, ὥστε νὰ μᾶς καταστήσει ὄντα ἐν πληρότητι χάριτος καὶ σοφίας! Ο Θεὸς γίνεται πλήρης ἀνθρωπὸς ἔκτὸς τῆς ἀμαρτίας, γενόμενος θανάτου, ὥστε νὰ βροῦμε «όδὸν σωτηρίας καὶ ζωὴν αἰώνιον». Ο Θεὸς προσφέρει ὡς δῶρο τὸν νίο του τὸ μονογενὴ στὴν κτίση, μιὰ μεγάλη δωρεὰ ποὺ δύσκολα τὴν κατανοοῦμε μὲ τὴ λογικὴ μας. Στὴν πραγματικότητα εἶναι ἡ ἕιδος ἡ ἀποστολὴ τῆς ἐκκλησίας, ὡς σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ποὺ δείχνει τὴν ἀπειρηνὴν ἀγάπην τοῦ Θεοῦ γιὰ ὅλη τὴ δημιουργία καὶ εἶναι ἐν τέλει ἡ ἀληθινὴ κλήση τοῦ Θεοῦ πρὸς ὅλους ἡμᾶς!

Ἐτσι, ἀγαπητοί μου ἀδελφοί, ἀς ψάλουμε «Χριστὸς γεννᾶται! Δοξάσατε!» μὲ καρδιὲς προετοιμασμένες γιὰ νὰ δεχθοῦν τὸ θεῖο βρέφος! Ἄς ἀνανεώνουμε διαρκῶς τὴ γεναιοδωρία μας πρὸς τοὺς ἄλλους αὐτὴ τὴν ἀγία περίοδο, ἀποδεχόμενοι αὐτὸ ποὺ οἱ ἀδελφοί μας μποροῦν νὰ προσφέρουν, ἐμπνεόμενοι ἀπὸ τὸ «τεχθὲν νήπιον τῆς Βηθλεέμ».

Χριστὸς γεννᾶται! Δοξάσατε!

† ὁ Ἀμερικῆς Ἐλπιδοφόρος