



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS ^{OF} ATLANTA

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΑΤΛΑΝΤΑΣ



December 2022

Fr. Athanasios Haros and the faithful of St. Nicholas
Greek Orthodox Cathedral
17 E. Tarpon Avenue
Tarpon Springs, FL 34689

My beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord,

I greet you with love and joy, as we prepare to celebrate the Nativity of our Incarnate Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Having come to this Great Feast, we live in a world which still needs the song of the angels.

The American Christmas carol “It Came Upon the Midnight Clear” was written in the mid-19th Century, when Europe was in a time of revolution, and the U.S. had seen the end of the Mexican—American war. This was the state of the world in which a pastor, Edmund Sears, wrote

a song with verses like, “*But with the woes of sin and strife/The world has suffered long/Beneath the angel-strain have rolled/Two thousand years of wrong/And man, at war with man, hears not/The love-song which they bring/Oh hush the noise, ye men of strife/And hear the angels sing!*” Over one-hundred-and-fifty years later, as our world seems more divided, and as a majority Orthodox country attacks its brothers and sisters, the desire, the need, to hear the angels sing grows stronger.

We would do well to remember, my beloved, that the message of the Nativity is that of light in darkness. Christ comes into a world that does not receive Him in an inn, but in a cave for animals. The Magi come to praise the newborn King, but Herod seeks to murder him. Christ did not come into a world already perfect, He came to save a broken world, and He continues to do so today as “*the Physician of our souls and bodies*”. Despite the difficulties we encounter, whether in the world around us, or in our own lives, my prayer for this Nativity season is that you, your parish family, and your loved ones can listen—really *listen*—to the song of the angels. Only when this song pierces the hardness of our hearts, may we truly live the Gospel’s message of reconciliation between God and Man.

Looking to our Lord for His strength and support in this, and all our work, may we remember the true meaning of Christmas, this year, and in all the years to come: “*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will among men!*” (Luke 2:14) I therefore remain,

Yours with paternal love and blessings in our Incarnate Lord,

+ ALEXIOS
Metropolitan of Atlanta