



## GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF THYATEIRA AND GREAT BRITAIN

### 2022 Christmas Message His Eminence Archbishop Nikitas

Beloved people of God,

Within the sacred hymnology of our Church, we have the privilege and great blessing to explore a treasure-trove of theological meaning, deep spiritual reflection and creative expression. Take, for example, this last stanza of St. Romanos's Kontakion on the Nativity:

*Save the world, O Saviour. For this You have come. Set Your whole universe aright. For this You have shone on me and on the magi and on all creation. For see, the magi, to whom You have shone the light of Your face, fall down before You and offer gifts, useful, fair and eagerly sought. For I have need of them, since I am about to go to Egypt and to flee with You and for You, my Guide, my Son, my Maker, my Redeemer, a little Child, God before the ages.*

In a moment of holy inspiration, St. Romanos uses his poet's pen to invent a dramatic monologue wherein the young Virgin Mother addresses her new-born Son. Besides leaving us with a vivid impression, on the one hand, of her reverence and awe at beholding the long-awaited Saviour of the World, and, on the other hand, the tender love that is unique to a mother gazing at her infant child, we are also presented with the cosmic magnitude of the event that has just taken place. The history of the universe has changed forever; the heavens have been transplanted onto the Earth and a humble manger holds the *Logos*, the One through whom all things were made.

The renewal of creation is at hand, and that which was prophesized by Isaiah has come to pass: "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them light has shined" (Isaiah 9:2). With the Incarnation, light and hope have come to banish the gloom and darkness of a corrupted world. It is even revealed to the Gentiles that something great and unprecedented has happened, and the three Magi throw themselves at the feet of the

infant, offering their kingly gifts. Notice how the detail of the gifts — *for I have need of them* — is used to foreshadow the flight of the Holy Family from Herod into Egypt. An imminent danger is acknowledged, and yet, we feel a sense of calm in the light of God’s providence, even down to the practical details and needs of daily life. Then there is the phrase: *with You and for You* — what a succinct description of the life in Christ that every Christian desires!

I know that we live in difficult and challenging times. The current events of the world are filled with images of war, news reports of suffering, and a prevailing atmosphere of despair at the failures of leaders to keep the peace and defend the downtrodden. When trials and tribulations threaten to overcome us, we might be tempted to put our trust in princes or in mortal men, but we do well to remember that “happy is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God”. It is Christ who became man *for our sake and for our salvation*, and it is He who “executes justice for the oppressed, gives food to the hungry, sets the prisoners free, opens the eyes of the blind, lifts up those who are bowed down, loves the righteous, watches over the sojourners and upholds the widow and the fatherless” (Psalm 146). Miracles and salvation do not belong to the past, but are alive in His Church, so that the glory of God might be revealed. Only Jesus Christ can truly make “the weary world rejoice”, as we sing in the well-known Christmas carol.

Beloved in the Lord, let us approach the Feast of the Nativity with courage, guided by the Holy Spirit in prayer and reflection. By God’s grace, this year, this Christmas, even this very day, may we make room for Christ to be born in our hearts and to allow His love to change our lives, so that, abiding in Him, we can also learn to call out in fulness of faith and love: *my Guide, my Maker, my Redeemer, little Child, God before the ages*.

Merry Christmas to all.

With much paternal love and fervent prayers before Christ our God,



+ Archbishop Nikitas of Thyateira and Great Britain