



72<sup>nd</sup> Year

December 22, 2024

Pamphlet #51 (3734)

## **THE SUNDAY GOSPEL (Matthew 1:1-25)**

### **The birth of the God-Man**

*The book of the Genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Aram, and Aram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asa, and Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amon, and Amon the father of Josiah, and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon. And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Salathiel, and Salathiel the father of Zerubbabel, and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ. So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations. Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of*

*the Holy Spirit; and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel" (which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife, but knew her not until she had borne a son; and he called his name Jesus.*

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## **GOD WITH US**

One cannot approach the feast of Christmas without changing their mind, without ceasing to see things from the narrow and poor perspective of the egoistic, sick human being, and instead seeing them through the infinite perspective of God.

What takes place in Bethlehem is not a romantic story of symbolic content, suitable for feeding the imagination of small children, but a real and historical event. The Infant of Bethlehem is the Man of Sorrows, as the Prophet [Isaiah] expresses. For the first time in human history, the mystery of the Incarnate God is revealed in the cave, as a mystery of love, freedom, and renewal, a mystery of fatherly love offered voluntarily to humanity. "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name 'Emmanuel, which means God with us'" (Matthew 1:23).

### **The salvation of the world**

The feast of Christmas, which, according to the characteristic expression of Saint Gregory the Theologian, is an "earthquake," is the central mystery of the entire divine Economy. This explains why Christmas is celebrated and rejoiced as "the salvation of the world, the birth day of humanity, the common feast of all creation" (St. Basil the Great). Because "the Word of God, who dwelt among us, emptied Himself, so that through His emptying the world might be filled." God becomes a perfect and true human being, "a man in suffering," "in the form of a servant," without ceasing to be perfect and true God, to make man a complete and perfect son of God and a god by Grace.

## **Christ and man**

In our days, many strive for the autonomy and freedom of man independently of the God-Man Christ. However, man without Christ essentially denies himself and desolates his existence from his authentic human nature, severely harms and damages himself, suffers and tragically becomes enslaved to sin, corruption, and death, to hopeless situations and nihilism.

Celebrating the greatest event of all times and ages, the Birth of our Christ, the Son and Word of God in the flesh, and obeying His word and example:

- Let us reconcile with God.
  - Let us free our mind from enslavement to a teaching that ignores God as a perfect God and perfect man.
  - Let us learn that we know God by cultivating a relationship and not by understanding a concept.
  - Let us relive the priority of life and not mere survival.
  - Let us break the circle of our selfishness.
  - Let us discover in the darkness of ourselves the face of our fellow human being and touch it with understanding and sympathy.
- And in our moments of weakness, let us not forget to take Christ with us, the source of life, Life itself, our Joy, and our Hope.

† F. A.

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December 22, 2024: Sunday Before the Nativity of Christ

Commemoration of all those who have been well-pleasing to God from all ages, from Adam to Joseph the betrothed of the Most Holy Theotokos; likewise, of the prophets and prophetesses, especially the Prophet Daniel (560 BC) and the holy three children.

Great Martyr Anastasia, the Deliverer from Potions (†304).  
Martyrs Chrysogonos and Theodote.

1st Tone – Eothinon: 4 – Epist: Heb. 11:9-10, 32-40 – Gosp.: Matt. 1:1-15

NEXT SUNDAY: December 29, Sunday After the Nativity of Christ  
Epistle: Galatians 1:11-19 – Gospel: Matthew 2:13-23

## **SEPARATION FROM GOD IS HELL**

I don't remember a day without divine comfort. Sometimes breaks occur, and then I feel bad, and thus I can understand how badly most people live who are inconsolable because they are distant from God. The farther one moves from God, the harder things become. One may have nothing; if they have God, they want nothing else! That's it! Whereas, if they have everything, but lack God, they are tormented

inside. Therefore, as much as one can, they should draw closer to God. Only near God does one find true and eternal joy. We taste bitterness when we live far from sweet Jesus. When a man transforms from a rogue to a man, a prince, nourished by divine delight and heavenly sweetness, he feels the paradisiacal joy, experiencing a part of the joy of Paradise here.

From the small paradisiacal joy, he daily progresses to greater joy and wonders if there is something superior in Paradise to what he experiences here. He lives in such a state that he cannot perform any work. His knees buckle like candles from the divine warmth and sweetness, his heart leaps and is ready to burst through his chest to leave, because the earth and its worldly things seem like lost things. Man initially had communication with God. However, when he distanced himself from God's Grace, it was as if he lived in a palace and then found himself forever outside the palace, seeing it from afar and weeping. Just as a child suffers when separated from its mother, so does man suffer and become tormented when he distances himself from God. Separation from God is hell.

The devil has managed to distance people so much from God that they have reached the point of worshipping statues and sacrificing their children to them. Terrible! And where do the demons find so many gods? Just hearing the name of God is enough! However, the most tormented one is the devil because he is the farthest from God and love. If love departs, then it is hell. The opposite of love is what? Malice; malice equals torment. One who is distant from God receives demonic influence. While one who is close to God receives divine Grace. Whoever has God's Grace will be given more. And whoever has little and disregards it, even that will be taken away. God's Grace is missing from today's people because with sin, they discard even the little they have.

(From the book of the Apostolic Ministry,  
*Anthology of Counsels of Saint Paisios the Haghiortite*)

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