



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA
ARCHEPISCOPAL ENCYCLICAL

Prot. No. 442/2024

Archebiscopal Encyclical on the Feast of Christmas

December 25, 2024

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

And the [star] led the Magi to You, who worshipped You in faith; have mercy upon them and upon us.

(Troparion, Plagal of the Second Mode)

Beloved sisters and brothers in Christ,

This Christmas, let us manifest a special joy and appreciation that even secular society acknowledges the Birth of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is often difficult to keep the Feast of the Nativity as pure as we would like to, with the seemingly endless commercialization that surrounds it. Nevertheless, even with all the tinsel and sparkle, the Name of the Lord is spread abroad by the world's imperfect regard for Christmas. We can agree with Saint Paul who says: *Christ is preached! More in every way, whether by pretext or by truth. And at this, I rejoice! And I shall rejoice more!* (Philippians 1:18). We should also share in the same joy, because as inadequate as secular and commercial observances of Christmas may be, at least people are exposed to the name and narrative of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Magi (from whence the word "magician" comes), who were led to worship the Newborn Babe of Bethlehem by a Star, were astrologers watching the heavens for signs and wonders. They were not Jewish, but rather Persian, likely Zoroastrians, an ancient religion founded by Zoroaster (Greek: Ζωροάστρης), six centuries before the Birth of our Savior. They found their way to Bethlehem by following an exceptional Star that had arisen in the western night sky — a Star that had been prophesied in ways we do not fully



understand. Their path to Christ may not have followed the Hebrew Prophets, but it still led them to Him.

There are so many in this world — Christian and non-Christian alike — whose connection to the Lord comes only through the Nativity and the many cultural traditions that have arisen around it. And perhaps, one day, like the Magi, a spiritual Star will arise in their hearts and lead them to the continuing Bethlehem, (which means the House of Bread), that is our Holy Orthodox Church.

This Christmas Season let us take joy and not begrudge the journey of others. Let us be willing to find an understanding and even an admiration for all those who — like the Magi — observe with some degree of faith and recognition the Birth of our Savior. For He was born in a cave and laid in a manger for the sake of every human being, and indeed, for all creation.

Χριστὸς Γεννᾶται! Δοξάσατε! Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

† Ἐλπίδοφορος

† ELPIDOPHOROS
Archbishop of America



ΙΕΡΑ ΑΡΧΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΗ ΑΜΕΡΙΚΗΣ ΑΡΧΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΙΚΗ ΕΓΚΥΚΛΙΟΣ

Αριθμ. Πρωτ.: 442/2024

Αρχιεπισκοπική Έγκύκλιος Χριστουγέννων.

25 Δεκεμβρίου 2024

Πρὸς τοὺς Σεβασμιωτάτους καὶ Θεοφιλεστάτους Ἀρχιερεῖς, τοὺς Εὐλαβεστάτους Ἱερεῖς καὶ Διακόνους, τὶς Πρεσβυτέρες καὶ τὶς Διακόνισσες, τοὺς Μοναχοὺς καὶ τὶς Μοναχές, τοὺς Προέδρους καὶ τὰ Μέλη τῶν Κοινοτικῶν Συμβουλίων, τοὺς Ἐντιμολογιωτάτους Ἄρχοντες τοῦ Οἰκουμενικοῦ Πατριαρχείου, τὰ μέλη τῆς Ἡγεσίας τῶν 100, τὰ Ἡμερήσια καὶ Απογευματινὰ Σχολεῖα, τὶς Φιλοπτώχους Ἀδελφότητες, τὴ Νεολαία, τὶς Ἑλληνορθόδοξες Ὄργανώσεις καὶ ὁλόκληρο τὸ Χριστεπώνυμο πλήρωμα τῆς Ἱερᾶς Αρχιεπισκοπῆς Ἀμερικῆς.

«Καὶ Μάγους σοὶ προσήνεγκεν, ἐν πίστει προσκυνοῦντάς σε· μεθ' ὧν ἐλέησον ἡμᾶς»

(Τροπᾶριο τῶν ἀναγνωσμάτων τοῦ ἑσπερινοῦ τῶν Χριστουγέννων).

Προσφιλεῖς ἀδελφοὶ καὶ ἀδελφές ἐν Χριστῷ,

Τὰ φετεινὰ Χριστούγεννα ἀποτελοῦν ἀκόμη μία εὐκαιρία νὰ δοξάσουμε τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ Θεοῦ, διότι ἀκόμη καὶ ἡ κοσμικὴ κοινωνία ἐορτάζει τὴ γέννηση τοῦ σωτῆρος καὶ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. Εἶναι ἀρκετὰ δύσκολο ἢ ἐορτὴ τῶν Χριστουγέννων νὰ μείνει ἀνέγγιχτη ἀπὸ τὴ φαινομενικὰ ἀτελείωτη ἐμπορευματοποίηση πού τὴ συνοδεύει. Ὅμως ἀκόμη καὶ μέσα ἀπὸ τὰ στολίδια καὶ τὰ φωτάκια, ἀκόμη καὶ μὲ αὐτὴ τὴν ἀτελὴ κατανόηση τοῦ κόσμου γιὰ τὰ Χριστούγεννα, τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ Κυρίου διαδίδεται, καθὼς καὶ ὁ ἀπόστολος Παῦλος λέει πρὸς τοὺς Φιλιππησίους: «Χριστὸς καταγγέλλεται! Καὶ ἐν παντὶ τρόπῳ, εἴτε προφάσει, εἴτε

ἀληθεία. Καὶ ἐν τούτῳ χαίρω. Ἀλλὰ καὶ χαρήσομα!» (1:18). Συμμετέχουμε λοιπὸν στὴ χαρὰ τοῦ ἀποστόλου Παύλου, διότι ὅσο ἀνεπαρκεῖς καὶ ἂν εἶναι οἱ κοσμικὲς ἐκδηλώσεις γιὰ τὶς ἐορτὲς τῶν Χριστουγέννων, τουλάχιστον οἱ ἄνθρωποι εὐαγγελίζονται μὲ τὸ ὄνομα καὶ τὴν ἀφήγηση τῆς γεννήσεως τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

Οἱ Μάγοι, οἱ ὁποῖοι ὁδηγήθηκαν νὰ προσκυνήσουν τὸ νεογέννητο βρέφος στὴ Βηθλεέμ, ἀκολουθώντας τὸν ἀστέρα, ἦταν ἀστρολόγοι καὶ ἐρευνούσαν τὸν οὐρανὸ γιὰ σημεῖα, ἐξηγώντας τὰ μελλούμενα. Δὲν ἦταν Ἰουδαῖοι ἀλλὰ Πέρσες, πιθανότατα Ζωροάστρες, μιὰ θρησκεία ποὺ ἴδρυσε ὁ Ζωροάστρης ἕξι αἰῶνες πρὶν τὴ γέννηση τοῦ Σωτῆρος μας. Βρῆκαν τὸ δρόμο γιὰ τὴ Βηθλεέμ, ἀκολουθώντας ἓνα ὑπέρλαμπρο ἀστέρι, ποὺ ἀνέτειλε στὸ δυτικὸ νυχτερινὸ οὐρανό, μὲ ἓνα τρόπο ποὺ ἀποκαλύφθηκε σὲ αὐτοὺς χωρὶς νὰ μπορούμε νὰ τὸν κατανοήσουμε πλήρως. Ἡ πορεία αὐτὴ μπορεῖ νὰ μὴν ἦταν ἡ ἴδια μὲ αὐτὴ τῶν ἑβραίων προφητῶν, ἀλλὰ τοὺς ὁδήγησε καὶ αὐτοὺς πρὸς τὸ Χριστό.

Πολλοὶ ἄνθρωποι στὸν κόσμον, χριστιανοὶ καὶ μὴ, ἔχουν ἐπαφὴ μὲ τὸν Κύριο μόνο μέσα ἀπὸ τὰ Χριστούγεννα καὶ τὶς πολυάριθμες πολιτιστικὲς παραδόσεις ποὺ ἔχουν ἀναπτυχθεῖ γιὰ αὐτὴν τὴ μεγάλη ἐορτή. Ἴσως κάποια μέρα, ὅπως στοὺς Μάγους, ἀνατείνει καὶ γιὰ αὐτοὺς κάποιο πνευματικὸ ἀστέρι ποὺ θὰ τοὺς ὁδηγήσει στὴν αἰώνια Βηθλεέμ, ἢ ὁποῖα μεταφράζεται ὡς «ἡ οἰκία τοῦ ἄρτου» καὶ εἶναι ἡ Ἁγία Ὁρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία μας.

Αὐτὰ τὰ Χριστούγεννα ἄς γευθοῦμε αὐτὴ τὴν ἀνυπέροβλητη χαρὰ χωρὶς νὰ κατακρίνουμε τὸ ταξίδι τῶν ἄλλων, ποὺ ὅπως οἱ Μάγοι παρατηροῦν καὶ ἀναγνωρίζουν μὲ κάποια πίστη τὴ γέννηση τοῦ Σωτῆρος μας. Διότι γεννήθηκε στὸ σπήλαιον καὶ σπαργανώθηκε στὴ φάτνη γιὰ κάθε ἄνθρωπο καὶ γιὰ ὅλη τὴν κτίση!

Χριστὸς Γεννᾶται! Δοξάσατε!,

A handwritten signature in Greek script, reading 'ὁ Ἀμερικῆς Ἐλπιδοφόρος' (The American Evangelist).

† ὁ Ἀμερικῆς Ἐλπιδοφόρος