



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF BOSTON
ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΒΟΣΤΩΝΗΣ

Christmas Encyclical

December 25, 2012

***To the Rev. Clergy and Faithful
of the Metropolis of Boston***

Beloved in the Lord,

***“To you is born this day
a savior who is Christ the Lord”
Luke 2:11***

Christmas is the celebration of the birth of the Incarnate Lord. It is not merely an anniversary, but a mystery that continues to mark the history of mankind. We are invited by the hymns of our Church to live and experience this wondrous event in a meaningful way. “Today Christ is born of the Virgin in Bethlehem....He who knows no beginning, now begins to be, and the Word is made flesh”. We are invited to live this mystery TODAY by offering our hearts as a manger so that our lives may be renewed by the Incarnate Savior.

Sadly, this blessing will not be experienced by many of our brethren. The proclamation that Christ the Savior has been born seems to have fallen upon deaf ears. A recent study produced by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life found that a growing number of our fellow Americans are unaffected by the Incarnate Lord or His Church. The study reported that as many as 13 million are atheists and agnostics, while another 33 million have no particular religion affiliation. The brilliant star of Bethlehem has faded in the shadows of their disbelief, discouragement, and disillusionment. Modern men and women follow their own star, not the one leading to the Incarnate Lord. Their ears are deaf to the song of the angelic choir proclaiming the renewal of mankind. As we read in the Gospel of St. John, the Incarnate Lord, “came to His own home and His own people received Him not” (John 1:11)

The birth of Christ is described by St. Gregory the Theologian thusly:

He who IS, comes into being.

The UNCREATED is created.

The INFINITE is confined.

He who ENRICHES becomes poor,

for He impoverishes my flesh

that I may grow rich in His Divinity.

He who is FULLNESS empties himself,

for He is emptied of His glory

for a time that I may partake of His FULLNESS

The mystery of the Incarnation is beyond the limits of human comprehension. As our hymns teach us, “It is past all interpretation”.... “We cannot fathom this mystery, but by faith alone we glorify it”. It is only our faith which enables us to believe that the birth of our Savior is not a datum of history, alien to and unrealized in our lives, but a reality with potential for life and communion with Christ that is accessible TODAY, for Christ is born TODAY. As we celebrate Christmas we are invited to become participants of this mystery of divine dispensation. Church hymns encourage us to “behold where Christ is born and follow the guiding star, for TODAY Bethlehem receives Him that at all times sits with the Father....He is the mighty God that holds in His dominion the creation”.

Christ’s birth “in the days of Herod the King” (Matthew 2:1) does not vanish into a remote past, but is triumphantly declared by the Church as an ever present grace which shapes the lives of all those who believe. Men and women of faith are given the blessing to participate in the mystery of the divine Incarnation by offering their hearts as a manger for “the infinite to be confined”.

The secular and materialistic environment in which we live prevents many brethren from living and experiencing the mystery of Christmas. Estranged from Christ, they are spiritually impoverished and therefore exploited by various ideologies which promise a new era—a paradise if you will—without Christ. In fact, all they do is generate fear and angst, pain, grief, and the loss of hope. We live in a culture of cruelty and social decay, in a world where evil often rears its ugly head.

It seems that all we care about is the danger of America “falling off the fiscal cliff”. While our currency claims that “In God we trust”, recent events indicate that, in fact, we do not—that America has fallen off “the moral cliff”. Sunday used to be the day dedicated to the worship of almighty God. Following Church, we would gather at dinner with our families to enjoy each other’s company and share life’s experiences. Now, Sunday is just another day to do our shopping or watch our children participate at various sports events. The definition of marriage and family has changed. We seem to have lost any sense of shame. Lifestyles and attitudes previously hidden in “the closet” are now out in the open. Regrettably, more than half of all marriages end in divorce. Countless children are raised in single parent homes resulting oftentimes in tragic consequences.

Just the other day, in a blink of an eye, 27 innocent human beings in Connecticut, 20 of whom were children between the ages of 6-7 were murdered. This act of unfathomable horror defies explanation and understanding. What has America come to? What is it that brings forth atrocities such as the one in Connecticut and before that, those in Columbine and Virginia Tech, and Denver and Oregon, just to mention a few. Is it not that America has fallen off “the moral cliff”?

Have you paid attention to the lyrics of today’s songs? Are you aware of the violent content of most movies and TV shows, of video games that our children watch? Do you listen to the content of radio and TV talk show hosts and news commentators? Do you notice what individuals are lifted up as worthy to be emulated in today’s society?

It is to this world that the Church proclaims the Birth of Christ. More than ever before men and women must make room in their hearts for the Incarnate Lord. Only then can we be freed from whatever demons beset us. Only the birth of the Incarnate Savior in our heart can liberate us from the powers of darkness and give us a new perspective and purpose in his life.

Christmas is the day when the Son of God enters our hearts offering Himself as grace, as reconciliation, as peace, as hope and salvation, as new life. Let us pray that He will choose our hearts as His manger this Christmas, and let us share the joyous news that “unto us is born a young child, the pre-eternal God that He might fashion corrupt Adam anew”.

**With Archpastoral love
in the Incarnate Lord,**

Methodios

**METHODIOS
Metropolis of Boston**