

ΟΙΚΟΥΜΕΝΙΚΟΝ  
ΠΑΤΡΙΑΡΧΕΙΟΝ



ECUMENICAL  
PATRIARCHATE

ΙΕΡΑ ΑΡΧΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΗ ΘΥΑΤΕΙΡΩΝ & Μ. ΒΡΕΤΑΝΙΑΣ  
ARCHDIOCESE OF THYATEIRA & GREAT BRITAIN

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To the Most Reverend Priests & Deacons, the Most Honourable Chairmen and Members of the Parish Councils of the Churches, the Ladies' Auxilliary Committees, and the Christbearing Flock of the Holy Archdiocese of Thyateira, Great Britain & Ireland.

Dearly Beloved Brethren & Children Beloved of the Lord.

Once again, Christmas has arrived to re-ignite the souls of men, and to renew the joy and blessed hope felt by the Magi and the Shepherds on the Holy Night of the Birth of the God-Man Christ, in Bethlehem of Judaea, more than two thousand years ago. Once again, we will hear the angelic hymn, "*glory to God in the highest and on earth peace and good will towards men*" (Luke 2:14), prophetically announcing the New Age which the God-Man Christ ushered in for the human race. Ever faithful to the message of Christmas, the worshipping and praying Church, continues to celebrate the Mystery of the Divine Nativity, chanting "*Thou wast born secretly in the cave, but heaven spoke through a star and proclaimed Thee to all, O Saviour. And it brought to Thee Magi, who worshipped Thee with faith; have mercy upon them and upon us*" (Vespers Troparion of Christmas).

It is for good reason, that we Christians have continued to ceaselessly glorify Him who is the Cause of the joy and the age-long expectation of the Nations, for "*in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things*" (Hebrews 1:2-3). This is why "*on this day, let the heavens and the earth rejoice prophetically, let angels and us men keep spiritual feast, for God has appeared in the flesh*" (Great Compline Hymn of Christmas).

Let us therefore, dear Brethren and Fathers, cast off all the sadness that afflicts us as persons and as a community. Let us look past every unsightly spectacle that we are exposed to on a daily basis through television, internet and newspapers. Let us not forget that Christ came to the inhabited world for both good and evil persons, whom we encounter along our path every day. Let us pray for peace and justice to prevail amongst Mankind. Let all warring factions be reconciled in the Middle East and in other places of the World, that the will of God may triumph in our lives.

Righteous it is indeed, to commemorate also Our Lady Theotokos and Mother of God, who "*full of grace, found ample space to contain the uncontainable nature, and through whom God and flesh worked together, in an ineffable encounter*" (St. John Chrysostom, T10, pg.946). In a manner both wondrous yet human, the All Holy Virgin co-operated in God's eternal plan for the salvation of the World, and together with the wise Joseph the Betrothed, journeyed together from Nazareth to Bethlehem, and from there commenced upon the bitter road of exile into Egypt.

Christmas provides us with a bright opportunity to cultivate the virtues of the Divine Infant: simplicity, humility, self-sacrifice, self-denial and a sharing of our possessions with the poor, the sick, the orphans, the widows, those in prison, the strangers, the homeless and all those who have become aggrieved by society and the heartlessness of people. Only thus can we truly and genuinely rejoice these Holy Days where we commemorate the earthly Visitation of the God-Man Christ amongst us. Let us plead for Him to remain forever with us, that He may enlighten us in our sorrows and that He may heal the wounds of our bodies and souls. Let us seek refuge in our Churches, where we may celebrate like true children of the God-Man Christ, and let us partake there, of the Immaculate Sacraments unto remission of sins and life everlasting. It is with such sacred thoughts and expectations, that I am communicating with you all. I wish you all a blessed and peaceful Christmas. May the Newly-born Christ visit and bless you in your homes. May He sanctify your souls and bodies, and may He grant you the joy and peace shared by all pious Orthodox Christians who have lived through the centuries, and who have preserved the Mystery of the Nativity of the "Spiritual Sun of Righteousness" Jesus Christ, so as to bequeath it to us as a most precious and holy entrustment, for His glory unto the ages of ages. Amen

Christmas 2015

Archbishop of Thyateira  
& Great Britain Gregorios

Note: to be read from the pulpit on the Sunday before the Nativity of Christ 20-12-2015 or the Sunday after Christmas 27-12-2015