

23 Δεκεμβρίου 2018

## **Christ is continuously being born in the Church and begets us anew (Metropolitan Evyenios of Rethymna and Avlopotamos)**

[Ξένες γλώσσες / In English](#)



Before us once again is the central Feast in the calendar, Christmas, and all of us who believe in Christ as our Saviour, Redeemer and Benefactor celebrate with joy and gladness, knowing by experience the theological depth and fundamental importance of this Feast.



Christ came into the world and affectionately called us to Himself. He came and became a human person in order to give us the opportunity to be 'gods by grace'. He came and became as we are in order to give us hope we can become as He is. He came and gave us His love in order to teach us to love. He came and brought us His peace on earth in order to teach us to make peace with ourselves and all other people- who aren't strangers, but our brothers and sisters. He came and became a human person for the whole of humanity, not just for the 'chosen few'. This is why 'there is no Jew nor Greek' (Gal. 3, 28) and why nationalism, in any of its manifestations, is not to be tolerated. We're all His kin and all related to each other. Anyone who attacks this family connection and splits the Church certainly isn't acting in the way Christ wants. He came to give us the invitation to walk in His footsteps, to follow Him. He came not to call 'the righteous, but sinners to repentance'. This is our consolation and He is our advocate [or 'comforter'], as Saint John the Evangelist so aptly wrote in his 1st general Epistle (chap. 2, 1-2): 'But if anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atonement for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the those of the whole world'. This, then, is why we rejoice: because 'He was born for us' and He sacrificed Himself for us and for our sins.

So, in the Church we celebrate Christmas eternally and for us it isn't merely a feast

that comes and goes. Christ is continuously being born in the Church and begets us anew. He's offered to us at every Divine Liturgy, seeking a place to lie in the manger in the Bethlehem cave, that is our being. Are we ready for this sublime visitation? Are we overjoyed at this reception? Do we feel the all-embracing love which sanctifies and transforms our being? If yes, then let us truly celebrate Christmas. We'll then put the outer show into the proper perspective. Behind the arrays of lights, we'll see the Light of Christ which 'illumines all'. Behind the garish decorations, we'll realize the beauty of personal transfiguration, that feeling revealed by the voices of the children singing that 'the whole of nature rejoices'. We will then also understand our responsibility as Christian towards the world, as bearers of the message of peace, of goodwill and of truth. Those of us who bear the name of Christians have been ordered to become His witnesses in the world, to bring into people's hearts the glad tidings of His incarnation, its aim and purpose; in other words, its most profound meaning for people and their salvation. And certainly, if we're to be convincing, we should first practice what we preach. In essence, this means to make manifest that we're true disciples of Christ, recognizable as such by the love we have for one another. Let divisions and controversy, discord and hostility, and the factionalism that fragments be confined to the reaches of the world outside us. Let us be known by our patience, humility, tolerance, forgiveness, slowness to anger and the eternal teaching of the Divine Dispensation. All the things that teach people to become really human and to act lovingly, genuinely and authentically.

With these thoughts, I urge you, from the heart, to spend a meaningful, true, real Christmas, so that it'll also be happy; a Christmas with Christ, not without Him.

With the love of Him Who binds us, unites us, preserves us, which sanctifies our relationship, I embrace you and bring you the embrace and love of our Father and Patriarch of the Mother Church, the Ecumenical Patriarchate, in the Holy and Sacred Synod of which I have been blessed to participate, since last September, for a year.



I hope, paternally, that you will live for many years, blessed by our Incarnate Lord, full of spiritual joy and inexhaustible strength that, with self-knowledge, will lead from misdirection to perfection, from self-idolization to true faith, from tragic loneliness to the communion of the Church and God's warm embrace.

In conclusion, I entreat that, in our prayers and the charitable impulses of our soul, we don't forget our needy brothers and sisters throughout the world, those who are undergoing trials and those who've never heard the words 'human rights'.

Let's not forget all those who are seeking meaning in their life, hope in their plight, an end to their tribulations, freedom from their slavery, and respect for their person.

Let's not forget our homeland, which is suffering a spiritual drought, and the Church which, despite the adversities, continues to tread its path, to bring benefit, to welcome and to cure all of us.

And finally, let's not forget that 'The Nativity occurs within us. Outside is its form, which is revealed to us' as Yorgos Themelis wrote in a poem. This year, may we have a profound sense of this and may we experience this manifestation within ourselves.

With love and festal greetings,

† Evyenios of Rethymna and Avlopotamos