

PASTORAL LETTER 2020



NATIVITY OF OUR LORD AND GOD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST

Christ is born! Let us glorify Him!

Beloved Spiritual Children in Christ,
Reverend Clergy, Venerable Monastics, Devout Faithful of our God-protected Episcopate:

May God our Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the All-Holy Spirit
grant you grace and peace, and from us, hierarchal blessings!

“Heaven and earth are united today, for Christ is born. Today God has come upon earth, and man has gone up to heaven. Today, for man’s sake, is seen in the flesh He, who by nature is invisible. Therefore, let us give glory and cry aloud to Him: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, which Your coming has bestowed on us, O Savior. Glory to You!”

Litua of Nativity Great Vespers

Dearly Beloved in Christ,

“And on earth, peace which Your coming, O Christ, has bestowed.”

In living our holy Orthodox Christian faith, we participate in a mystical manner in the actual events concerning our Lord and God and Savior, Jesus Christ, events having to do directly with us. Many hymns begin with the word, “Today,” such as stated above: *“Today, God has come upon earth...”* and *“today, for man’s sake, is seen in the flesh He, who by nature is invisible.”* Likewise, in many folk carols of Christmas, we hear the same phrase: *“Christ our Lord is born today... Astăzi s-a născut Hristos.”* In other words, WE are now present in the cave beholding the Christ child lying before us in the manger! WE are there! WE are present with the Holy Virgin Mother, with Joseph and the others. “Today” is always “the present” for believers, inasmuch as the celebrated events change our lives, our very existence now and forever!

It is in the celebration of these events that we have His peace in our lives.

Saint John Chrysostom expounds: *“Ask not how: for where God wills, nature’s order is surpassed. For He willed, He had the power, He descended, He redeemed....”* [Homily on Nativity Morning]. This birth on earth of Christ among us is happening today, in our time, in our day. Out of His immeasurable love for us, God willed this to be. The Evangelist John reminds us: *“Think of the love that the Father has lavished on us, by letting us be called God’s children; and that is what we are;”* and further on he says: *“...we are already the children of*

God, but what we are to be in the future has not yet been revealed...we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as he really is.” [1 John 3:1,2]

It is in the celebration of these events that we have His peace in our lives.

As God wills, nature must respond; but to us, God offers an invitation to personally respond to this event. Saint Leo, Pope of Rome, exhorts us: *“Let us rejoice. Sadness is not becoming on the Birth Day of Life Itself which, now that the fear of death is ended, fills us with gladness because of our own promised immortality.”* [Homily on Nativity Morning] Thus, the sadness we bear in knowing that death comes to all, must be overcome by joy in Christ’s birth among us today, knowing, as Saint Gregory of Rome reminds us, that we *“...are destined to be the subjects of God’s heavenly Kingdom....”* [Homily 8 Nativity Morning]

It is in the celebration of these events that we have His peace in our lives.

No human event nor natural catastrophe can lessen or erase the peace God has bestowed on us through the events of Christ’s birth, His Incarnation, His Death, His Resurrection, His Ascension and the anticipated return at the final judgement. Again, let us pay attention to Saint Leo who says: *“Awake, O man, from sleep and recognize the dignity of your own nature! Remember, you are made in the image and likeness of God.”* [Homily Two, 6. Nativity Day]

It is in the celebration of these events that we have His peace in our lives.

Dearly beloved, is your heart heavy? Is the burden of life weighing on you? Greet one another with the cry that “Christ is born!” And listen for the response, “Let us glorify him!” Let us walk, no! Let us run to the cave! Look into the light in the stable and see: *“Christ the child is born today, Messiah to light the way, from now on and ever more, is the mercy of our Lord!”* Thus, let us indeed glorify Him! The Scriptures, the Fathers, the Saints all call us to rejoice and be glad for *“...God has come upon earth and man has gone up to heaven.”*

**Christ is born! Let us glorify Him!
The Messiah is among us! Let us go forth and receive Him!**

+ Nathaniel

**+ NATHANIEL
Archbishop of Detroit
and The Romanian Episcopate of America
Orthodox Church in America**