

ARCHPASTORAL LETTER 2022



NATIVITY OF OUR LORD AND GOD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST

Christ is born! Let us glorify Him!

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

May God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
grant you grace and peace, and from us, hierarchal blessings!

*“ You have revealed Yourself to the prophets in so far as You could be known, O Christ the Creator.
But in these later times, You have shown Yourself to all mankind when in the village of Bethlehem
You assumed our human condition.”* Vespers, December 23, Aposticha 2

Dearly Beloved in Christ,

The hymns of the Church, such as the one just quoted, are both words of praise to God and reminders to us of His great love for mankind. They cite the prophecies of the Old Testament and their fulfillment in Jesus Christ as related in the New Testament. These hymns are sung at the Matins or morning service, the Vespers or evening service, and other services throughout the day and night. These two services are sung in the parishes on Saturday evening and Sunday morning before the Divine and Holy Liturgy.

We confess in the Creed that we believe in one God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The self-revelation of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit took place over the ages. First of all, this was to Adam and Eve, as we read in the first chapter of Genesis, indicating a familial relationship between God and His beloved children. *“God said, ‘Let us make man in our own image, in the likeness of ourselves...’*” We may understand the plural pronoun *“ourselves”* to mean the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Through their disobedience to their Creator, our first parents were expelled and banished from His presence, from Paradise. Our Creator, out of love for His children, promises a Savior who will destroy evil and re-unite the created with the Creator.¹

The promise of a Savior is told throughout the ages in revelations to the Prophets, “as far as he could be known,” such as His birth in Bethlehem foretold by Micah: *“But you, Bethlehem... out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.”*² Isaiah tells us of the Savior’s virgin birth and His name: *“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel,”* “Immanuel” meaning “God with us.”³

This gradual revelation theme is also in our hymns of the Feast of the Transfiguration of Christ on the mountain in the presence of three of His disciples: *“You were transfigured on the Mount, O Christ our God, revealing Your glory to Your disciples as much as they were able to bear...so that when they saw You crucified, they would know it was voluntary.”*⁴ This is the fulfillment of the second part of the hymn: *“... You have shown yourself to all mankind... assuming our human condition.”*

Why was Jesus born? Why assume our human nature, and why is He called the Son of God? Saint Athanasius the Great of Alexandria answers these questions: *“...[Jesus] the Word was God. And His becoming man would not have taken place, had not the need of man become a cause.”* Here is the reason why the Father sent His Only-begotten Son, His Word...because humanity, you and I, all mankind, need Him to lead us back to peace with our Father in heaven, to overcome evil and to strike down the power that Death had over us, to restore us

to the presence of God through the Son by the power of the Holy Spirit. This Divine action reveals the depth of our Creator's love for every human being.⁵

In "these later times," God has shown himself to us, "to all mankind." Our Lady, the Virgin Mother Mary, herself relates through the Gospel of Saint Luke the fulfillment of all prophecies through the visit to her by Archangel Gabriel and of the birth of the promised Savior foretold. "*You are to conceive and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus*" (Jesus=Joshua meaning "Savior") "*He will be great and called the Son of the Most High...the Power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow and so the child will be Holy and will be called Son of God.*"⁶

The Prophet Daniel describes the work of the Savior, Christ: "*In my vision at night, I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into His presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and His kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.*"⁷ Isaiah further proclaims the work of the Savior: "*...to proclaim good news to the poor...to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners.*"⁸

Saint Hippolytus further explains: "*Let us believe...that God the Word came down from heaven..., thus becoming all that man is, with the exception of sin, that he might save fallen man and confirm immortality on mortals who believe on His name.*" We are reminded of the need for salvation, to be saved, as we sing in every Divine Liturgy the second hymn, "Only-begotten Son and Word of God" at the conclusion of which we pray, "Save us!" So today, on this Feast, we sing: "*Save us, O Son of God, born of the Virgin...save us who sing to you: Hallelujah!*" Hallelujah means "Praise God!"⁹

Dearly beloved in Christ, our hearts are joyful on this day on which we are present with Mary the Holy Mother of God, Joseph the Betrothed, the angels and shepherds in the village of Bethlehem where God revealed himself to us as a babe, "son of God and son of man" to usher in the salvation of the world, and let us sing, "Allelujah!"

Christ is born! Let us glorify Him!

The Messiah is among us! Therefore, let us go forth with lighted lamps and receive Him!



+ NATHANIEL

**Archbishop of Detroit and The Romanian Episcopate Romanian Episcopate
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¹ Genesis 3: 22, 23

² Micah 5:2

³ Isaiah 7:14

⁴ Kontakion

⁵ 4th Discourse against the Arians. MGR 26, 268 NPNF IV, 378

⁶ Luke 1:12 ff

⁷ Daniel 7:13-14

⁸ Isaiah 61:1

⁹ Against the Heresies of Noeticus, Ch 10. MGR 10, 817 ANF V, 227