



Office of the Bishop
312 Garfield Street
Johnstown, PA 15906

CHRISTMAS ARCHPASTORAL LETTER
December 25, 2017 / January 7, 2018

Protocol No. 15/2017

CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!

Dear Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we celebrate this joyous Feast of the Nativity in the flesh of our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ, I wish to share with you one of my favorite Christmas homilies from the Church Fathers concerning this day. St. John Chrysostom spoke on the Incarnation with these words:

“I behold a new and wondrous mystery!

My ears resound to the shepherd’s song, piping no soft melody, but loudly chanting a heavenly hymn!

The Angels sing!

The Archangels blend their voices in harmony!

The Cherubim resound their joyful praise!

The Seraphim exalt His glory!

All join to praise this Holy Feast, beholding the Godhead herein...on earth and man in heaven. He Who is above now, for our salvation, dwells here below; and we, who were lowly, are exalted by divine mercy.

Today Bethlehem resembles heaven, hearing from the stars the singing of angelic voices and, in place of the sun, witnessing the rising of the Sun of Justice!

Ask not how it is accomplished, for where God wills, the order of nature is overturned. For He willed, He had the powers, He descended. He saved. All things move in obedience to God.

Today He Who Is, is born! And He Who Is becomes what He was not! For when He was God, He became man while not relinquishing the Godhead that is His...

And so the kings have come, and they have seen the heavenly King that has come upon the earth, not bringing with Him angels, nor archangels, nor thrones, nor dominions, nor powers, nor principalities, but treading a new and solitary path, He has come forth from a spotless womb.

Yet, He has not forsaken His angels, nor left them deprived of His care, nor because of His Incarnation has He ceased being God. And behold *Kings* have come, that they might serve the Leader of the Hosts of Heaven; *women*, that they might adore Him Who was born of a woman so that He might change the pains of childbirth into joy; *virgins*, to the Son of the Virgin...

***Infants*, that they may adore Him Who became a little Child, so that out of the mouths of infants He might perfect praise;**

***Children*, to the Child Who raised martyrs through the rage of Herod; *Men*, to Him Who became man that He might heal the miseries of His servants;**

***Shepherds*, to the Good Shepherd Who laid down His life for the sheep;**

***Priests*, to Him Who has become a High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek;**

***Servants*, to Him Who took upon Himself the form of a servant, that He might bless our stewardship with the reward of freedom;**

***Fishermen*, to the Fisher of humanity;**

***Publicans*, to Him Who from among them names a chosen evangelist;**

Sinful women, to Him Who exposed His feet to the tears of the repentant woman;

And that I may embrace them all together, all sinners have come, that they may look upon the Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world! Since, therefore, all rejoice, I too desire to rejoice! I too wish to share the choral dance, to celebrate the festival! But I take my part, not plucking the harp nor with the music of the pipes nor holding a torch, but holding in my arms the cradle of Christ!

For this is all my hope!

This is my life!

This is my salvation!

This is my pipe, my harp!

And bearing it, I come, and having from its power received the gift of speech, I too, with the angels and shepherds, sing:

Glory to God in the Highest! And on earth peace to men of good will.” Amen.

Personal Greetings:

Today may all of us, Priests, Panis, Deacons, Sub-Deacons, Readers, Parish Officers, Parishioners (young and old), Friends, and Supporters of our God-protected American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese experience the joy and wonders of the Shepherds and the awe and respect of the Three Wise Men at the arrival of the Messiah, our new born King. Christ is Born!

Greetings from Johnstown with much love,

+ Bishop Gregory

+Bishop Gregory of Nyssa

To be read as the sermon and distributed in all churches of the Diocese at the Divine Liturgy on the Feast Day of the Nativity of our Lord, God, and Saviour Jesus Christ!