



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA
METROPOLIS OF ATLANTA

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Christmas Bulletin 2016



From His Eminence, Metropolitan Alexis:

My Beloved,

Merry Christmas! By God's grace we have been deemed worthy once again to celebrate the Great Mystery of the Incarnation of the Savior, Who comes to bring love, peace and joy to a very troubled and disheartened world steeped in sin.

I join you in happiness and reverence to witness the miracle of the Nativity, and it is my heartfelt wish that you have a Merry Christmas as well as prosperity in Christ. May the Merciful King always strengthen and multiply every good initiative that helps us to progress in God.

With paternal love in our Lord,

+ ALEXIOS

Metropolitan of Atlanta



My Beloved Ones,

Every December 25th we are called to celebrate Christmas, the Nativity of the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our Lord humbled himself in taking on a human form, because our forefathers, Adam and Eve, disobeyed Him. As a result of this disobedience, humanity was separated from Paradise. But out of love for us, our Father sent His Son down to earth, so that we might be uplifted.

Unfortunately, for some, this fact has become a historical event or a cultural observation, maintained because of tradition. However, there are also the believers, who prepare themselves, and truly feel His coming.

For according to the teachings of our faith, He did not come only 2,000 years ago—He comes every year. When we got to church at midnight to hear the beautiful hymns that refer to Jesus Christ, we hear “*Today, He is born...*”

Of course, as creatures that live in materialistically focused communities and societies, we too try to cultivate that spirit. We buy things—whether out of love or obligation—and consume things, because we forget our spiritual selves.

And this is where I would like us to focus our attention. This time and this year, we should not forget *ourselves* as we prepare to celebrate Christmas.

You see, God is also waiting for a present. He is not waiting for the gift that we buy our loved ones—He waits for our heart; our mind; our well-being. He waits for the purification of sinful thoughts, and for our confession, so that with a clean heart we can really experience His coming.

When we truly experience His coming, we shall feel the Spirit of love and understanding; the Spirit of servitude and faith. When we feel these things, than shall we be uplifted.

I wish you all a Blessed Nativity, full of peace and joy.

+ALEXIOS

Metropolitan of Atlanta

From Fr Dean:

As we approach Christmas, “Let us celebrate the advent of the Nativity of Christ, and raising our minds on high let us journey in spirit to Bethlehem, and with the eyes of our soul let us look upon the Virgin, as she hastens to the cave to give birth to our God, the Lord of all. Joseph, when he beheld the greatness of this wonder, thought that he saw a mortal wrapped as a babe in swaddling clothes; but from all that came to pass he understood that it was the true God, who grants the world great mercy” (From the Aposticha of the Great Vespers of the Eve of the Nativity)

As this hymn reveals to us, the Advent season of the Orthodox Christian Church is one of spiritual preparation, of raising our minds, of journeying in spirit to Bethlehem, of looking upon the Virgin with the eyes of our soul. It is a celebrative preparation in anticipation of the great joy of the coming birth of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior who brings us the gift of salvation.

It is unfortunate that in our materialistic and hectic society, what was once a spirit of hospitality and giving has been transformed into a shopping frenzy and chaos. The spirit of the advent of Christmas has been transformed from a tranquil celebration to a season of panic stricken gross materialism. Spiritual preparation has given way to anxiety. Our hospitality and charity have become gift giving. This is certainly not the tranquil celebration our church wishes to

instill in us. This is certainly not the “cheerful giving” St. Paul speaks about. This is certainly not the peace on earth that our Lord Himself brought to us by His birth.

How can we possibly maintain the proper Orthodox Christian celebrative spiritual preparation?

We Orthodox Christians should keep the eyes of our soul on the Virgin, who is about to give birth to our God. We should pray for the peace and tranquility of Christ.

We Orthodox Christians should give thanks, not only on Thanksgiving Day, but every day. We should give the greatest expression of our thanks at every Divine Liturgy, by partaking of the precious Body and Blood of our Lord.

We Orthodox Christians should exchange our gift-giving for true charity. This does not mean that we should not exchange gifts with family and friends, but it does mean that we should consider those less fortunate and give them something as well. What a wonderful gift we give to our children when we teach them what gift giving really means in the eyes of the Lord.

Our hospitality should not merely mean to host a Christmas party. Our hospitality should seek to open our hearts and our homes to those who may not have family nearby during the holidays. We should seek out the lonely in our midst and extend our hospitality to them.

Finally, we Orthodox Christians should prepare for the coming of the Christ child through the Sacrament of Holy Confession. This is our vehicle of repentance, of turning our lives toward the Lord.

With the aid of the church, our journey to Bethlehem can be a spiritual and tranquil journey with the gift of peace waiting for us on Christmas Day. Without the church, we remain frenzied and anxious in our preparation and our journey will never really take us to Bethlehem, and if we don't journey there, we will never experience peace in our lives nor will we receive the great gift of salvation.