

Nativity Epistle of the Most Reverend Andronik, ROCA Archbishop of Ottawa and North America

“What shall we offer You, O Christ, who for our sakes have appeared on earth as a man?”
Sticheron to the Lord, proclaimed at the vigil before the feast of the Nativity of Christ

Congratulations on the Nativity of Christ and the 2009 New Year!

To you, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, honorable pastors, clergy, and the faithful flock of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, I direct my greeting and congratulations upon the glorious and salvific feast day of the Birth of our Lord in the flesh!

Once again, on this day, our thoughts return more than two thousand years back to the cave in Bethlehem to witness the event that which is sacred to all mankind – the Coming of the Lord, our Jesus Christ, to this world.

Like the Star of Bethlehem, our Mother Church, the Church Abroad, has brought us to this joyful event and with the Magi we bring to the Christ Child in place of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, our spiritual gifts, cleansed by fasting, and we glorify the Most Blessed Empress and Mother of God.

In awe and with song we glorify the wonder before our eyes, the Nativity of Christ, and we offer the Christ Child our profound gratitude for all of God’s blessings that have been bestowed upon the Church Abroad.

The year past, 2008, will remain an epochal year in the history of the Russian Church. By the Grace of God, the ruin wrought on our Holy Church in May 2007, on par with that manifested by the Herodians, was overcome in this year for all time. Slowly and with fidelity to the canons, all the elements of the Church Administration of the Church Abroad were restored; the Vth All-Diaspora Council was convened and concluded; the Synod of Bishops and Council of the Church Abroad were re-established; and the Chairman and First Hierarch of the Russian Church Abroad was elected – the Most Reverend Agafangel, Metropolitan of Eastern America and New York.

Our Nativity joy is further heightened by the fact that the honorable episcopate of the Church Abroad was further enlarged: the Most Reverend Georgiy (Kravchenko) was named to the Bolgrad cathedra, the Most Reverend Joseph (Hrebinka) was named to the Washington, D.C. cathedra, and two bishops joined the ROCA from the “Tikhon-Seraphim-Gennadiy” branch of the Russian Catacomb Church – Bishop John of Buinsk and Bishop Afanasiy of Vologodsk.

The vessel that is the Church Abroad has weathered the storm through the intercessions of St. John of Shanghai and Holy Hierarch St. Philaret (who was glorified during the Vth All-Diaspora Council), for which we thank the Lord, born those many years ago in Bethlehem.

Sadly our joy is not complete, as several of our brothers have recently left the redemptive haven of the Church Abroad.

Again, I appeal to all our former brethren, brothers and sisters, who left the Church Abroad at various times and under various circumstances and who may now find themselves in various “jurisdictions,” return, for God’s sake return to the Church. Leave behind your hurtful aspersions, pride, and enmity and may all of us here on earth join together in the angels’ joyful singing:

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to those on whom His favor rests!”

+ *Humble Andronik* Archbishop of Ottawa and North America