

**Nativity Epistle of the Most Reverend Georgiy  
Bishop of Bolgrad and Belgorod-Dnestrovsk**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ!

Today we celebrate an unimaginable event, which served as the beginning of a “new birth from on high” for all mankind. The long-anticipated Messiah, Our Lord Jesus Christ, through His love of mankind becomes the new Adam to heal and save the mankind of the fallen ancient Adam. St. Cyril of Jerusalem teaches us: “Great was the wound that covered mankind. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment (Isaiah 1:6).” Prophets everywhere cried out with tears and lamentations: “who will bestow salvation from Zion? (Psalms 13:7)...Bow thy heavens, O Lord, and come down (Psalms 143:5), the wounds of mankind are greater than our healing...The Evil which we are powerless to reform demands Your reformation...God heard the prayers of the prophets, the Father did not deride our dying race and sent down from heaven a Healer – His Son, our Lord.” The saint goes on to say: “Satan used our own flesh as a weapon against us, and ...that same weapon with which Satan defeated us, that same we are saved with. God came in our image to save mankind, came in our image to reward those in want, so that sinful mankind could be in communion with God...and where sin abounded, grace did much more abound...(Romans 5:20). It was ordained that God would suffer for our sake, but Satan would have never dared draw near had he known this. ‘For had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory (1 Corinthians 2:8).’ And so, the flesh poisoned death, so that the beast, when desiring to devour, would expel those whom he had devoured. ‘He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces (Isaiah 25:8).’ ”

And so, dear brothers and sisters, Jesus, in his humble arrival into the world, as a weak Newborn, lying in the manger in Bethlehem, gives us all the gift of the great joy of eternal communion with God. This joy is available to us here already on earth from the holy Chalice of Christ’s Church, to elevate and resurrect man, the fallen image of God, that is every one of us. Partaking of this new life with God and within God is attainable to all of us, my dear ones, if only we fervently aspire to this Life, despite our inabilities and weaknesses. Life in the light of the grace of God is obtainable to us. We only need to open our hearts to God. But how?!

The Son of God, who took on our human nature from the Most Holy Virgin Mary, was born into poverty and want. At His birth, His first dwelling was a cave, located outside of the city, a simple manger served as His cradle, straw for a bed, and swaddling His only clothes. Why was it necessary for God to appear on earth in such poverty and want? So that by His birth, He would assume all the fundamental ailments that beset all of mankind, “fleshly gratification, the desire for possessions, and worldly arrogance” (1 John 2:16), and demonstrate that the salvation, virtue, and good fortune of a person does not depend on luxury, wealth, and status. It depends above all on a humble and meek heart in which God abides. “...learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” (Matthew 11:29) are the words of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

“How dark and gloomy is that place where there is no light, so when there is no humility, all of our deeds and actions, which we believe are pleasing to God, are vain and meaningless” teaches Abbot Hesychios. With humility, the soul of a faithful Christian acknowledges firstly its spiritual inadequacy and begins to thirst after Jesus, because it acknowledges that by itself, by its own strengths, it cannot withstand or do good. That all its noble acts are supported and informed by the grace of God. In this way, the person who does good opens his heart to God and the heart is filled with genuine inner peace. The soul filled with Him does not worry and is not troubled by any misfortune or trial. Like Apostle Paul, that person meets every obstacle in life with the words, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?” (Romans 8:35) The soul of a Christian is struck with wonder, as it realizes that Godly good deeds are filled with spiritual benevolence and the treasure of heavenly salvation, since only humility makes us capable to accept God into our hearts.

Brothers and sisters, let us develop love of one another, leavened with humility, and may the Christ Child dwell among us. Let us direct all our deeds to be the fulfillment of God's life-giving commandments, so that sin does not stain our hearts and wickedness does not separate us from God.

Let us strengthen ourselves with the Sacraments of Christ's Church, so that the Kingdom of God begins to grow in our souls, to foreshadow blessed eternity in the house of the All-Merciful God.

I congratulate you all from my heart with the Feast day of the Nativity of Christ and wish God's peace, joy and God's blessings. Amen.

+*Georgiy*  
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