

The Voice



"Their voice has gone out into all the world;

and their proclamation to the ends of the universe."

Nativity of our Lord 2005/06

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The Nativity of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ **Рождество Господа Бога и Спаса нашего Иисуса Христа**

Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, was born of the Most Holy Virgin Mary in the city of Bethlehem during the reign of the emperor Augustus (Octavian). Caesar Augustus decreed that a universal census be made throughout his Empire, which then also included Palestinian Israel. The Jews were accustomed to be counted in the city from where their family came. The Most Holy Virgin and the Righteous Joseph, since they were descended from the house and lineage of King David, had to go to Bethlehem to be counted and taxed.

In Bethlehem they found no room at any of the city's inns. Thus, the God-Man, the Savior of the world, was born in a cave that was used as a stable.

"I behold a strange and most glorious mystery," the Church sings with awe, "Heaven, a Cave; the Virgin the Throne of the Cherubim; the Manger a room, in which Christ, the God Whom nothing can contain is laid." (Irmos of the 9th Ode of the Nativity Canon).

Having given birth to the divine Infant without travail, the Most Holy Virgin "wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger" (Lk 2:7). In the stillness of midnight (Wisdom of Solomon 18:14-15), the proclamation of the birth of the Savior of the world was heard by three shepherds watching their flocks by night.

An angel of the Lord (St. Cyprian says this was Gabriel) came before them and said: "Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, Who is Christ the Lord" (Lk 2:10-11). The humble shepherds were the first to offer worship to Him Who condescended to assume the form of a humble servant for the salvation of mankind. Besides the glad tidings to the Bethlehem shepherds, the Nativity of Christ was revealed by a wondrous star to the Magi. St. John Chrysostom and St. Theophylaktos, commenting on St. Matthew's Gospel, say that this was no ordinary star. Rather, it was "a divine and angelic power that appeared in the form of a star." St. Dimitrios of Rostov says it was a "manifestation of divine energy" (Narrative of the Adoration of the Magi). Entering the house where the Infant lay, the Magi "fell down, and worshipped Him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented Him gifts: gold, and frankincense, and myrrh" (Mt 2:11).

Troparion – Tone 4

Thy Nativity, O Christ our God,
Has shone to the world the Light
of wisdom! For by it, those who
worshipped the stars, Were
taught by a Star to adore Thee,
The Sun of Righteousness, And
to know Thee, the Orient from
on High. O Lord, glory to Thee!.

Kontakion – Tone 3

Today the Virgin gives birth to
the Transcendent One, And the
earth offers a cave to the Unap-
proachable One! Angels with
shepherds glorify Him! The wise
men journey with a star! Since
for our sake the Eternal God was
born as a Little Child!

Тропарь – глас 4

Рождество Твое Христе Боже
наш, возсия мирови свет разу-
ма в нем бо звездам служащий,
звездю учахуся Тебе кланяти-
ся Солнцу Правды, и Тебе ве-
дети с высоты востока; Госпо-
ди, слава Тебе.

Кондак – глас 3

Дева днесь Пресущественнаго
раждает, и земля вертеп Не-
приступному приносит, ангели
с пастырьми славословят, вол-
сви же со звездю путешест-
вуют; нас бо ради родися От-
роча младо Превечный Бог.

Patriarch Alexy II of Moscow and All Russia: Christmas Message to the Archpastors, Pastors, Monastics and All Faithful Children of the Russian Orthodox Church

Thou hast shone forth, O Christ, from the Virgin, the wise Sun of Righteousness,
and the star has shown Thee in the manger
which has embraced that which cannot be embraced.

Thou didst teach the magi to worship Thee, with whom we magnify Thee:
O Giver of life, glory to Thee!

(From the Office of Great Vespers for the Feast of the Nativity of Christ)

Beloved in the Lord your Graces the archpastors, the honourable priesthood, the diaconate in Christ, God-loving monks and nuns, pious laity - faithful children of the Russian Orthodox Church! On this holy and all-joyful day with fatherly love I congratulate you all on the great and radiant feast of the Nativity of Christ!

Once more the holy days of the Nativity turn our minds and hearts towards the Lord, serve to edify us spiritually, renew within us our experience of unity with God and each other in Christ's Church, created and headed by the Son of God Who has become Man. While abiding in prayerful contemplation before the manger in Bethlehem, we again and again ask ourselves: how are we to respond to the love of the Lord Who has sent His Only-begotten Son 'so that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life' (Jn 3:16)? What are we to do so that the unfading light of the star of Bethlehem shine not only for us but for our neighbours too? Who are we with on this holy night - with the shepherds? With the wise men? Or does the news of the miracle of the incarnation of God bring us consternation and confusion? It was simple people in the form of the shepherds who were the first to venerate the Infant God Who had been born. The wise men, who had hitherto not known the True God, brought Him precious gifts. Those who thought themselves spiritually perspicacious could not divine the day of the coming of the Lord.

If your hearts during these holy days are illumined by the simple joy of the shepherds of Bethlehem, if your minds and knowledge are drawn by the Nativity star, then I rejoice and give thanks to the All-Merciful Lord for you. Yet if the pursuit of earthly joys and the fear of losing them compel you to expel Christ from your hearts, then believe not the cunning precepts of the eternal deceiver and the killer of men the

devil. For there is no joy in the world that can be granted to people other than the joy given by Him Who is born today; as St. Paul says, 'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him' (1 Cor 2:9).

The world around us calls us ever more often to worship the idols of fame, power, abundance and pleasures. Yet the Church knows that this path leads to nowhere. In following it we receive not freedom but slavery, not joy but disillusionment, not strength but destruction, not life but death. Yet in following Christ, the wise men and the shepherds, who trustingly believed in Him, we not only ourselves acquire the true good but can also enlighten the whole world with what we say and do and through our prayers. I call upon all of you to this, both children of the Church and those who are as yet on the path towards the church and to Christ. Come, my beloved, and together we will venerate the Infant God, offering to Him the gift of our lives, our faith, our resolve to labour boldly and untiringly in His name, for the good of the Church and all people who need our help.

Let us follow the precepts of St. Ambrose of Milan and 'in greeting the day of the Lord's Nativity, cleanse ourselves, brothers, from all impurity of sin, let us fill His treasure trove with varied gifts so that on this holy day there is something with which we can give comfort to strangers, lighten the burden of widows and clothe the poor'. So then let us combine our efforts so that the joy of the Nativity of Christ enter every home and touch the heart and soul of every person.

My beloved! The past year of 2005 brought the Russian Church many bounties from the All-Merciful Lord. The Orthodox faith has been reborn all over our world, even in its remotest regions, and in this I see the good fruit of the labors

of enlightenment of our hierarchs, clergy and laity. I believe that these labors will not be left without God's blessing.

In striving diligently for the good of every person and the whole of Russian society, the Church works hand in hand with the state, secular society, Christians of other confessions, people of other faiths and convictions. And may there remain in our lives many difficulties and problems - the power of God, which has many times been revealed to our people, imparts to us the great hope of a life of prosperity and peace 'in all godliness and reverence' (1 Tim 2:2).

I would like especially to appeal to the archpastors, pastors and flock of Orthodox Ukraine. Remember, my beloved, that the Holy Mother Church embraces with love each one of us. Let us strengthen our communion in prayer, good deeds and care for the welfare of the Church. It is my belief that through common labours we can vanquish schisms and divisions and forever remain brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus, for we were baptized in a common font and called to the one Kingdom of God.

In the year that has passed the Church, together with the whole people of Russia, celebrated the sixtieth anniversary of the victory in the Great Patriotic War. Let us then preserve in strength that which our forbearers have created and defended. May their accomplishments inspire the youth to a selfless and sacrificial service for the Fatherland.

Church-wide celebrations for the 450th anniversary of the founding of the diocese of Kazan, the 450th anniversary of the demise of St. Nil of Stolobny and the 300th anniversary of the coming of Orthodoxy to Kamchatka took place. These memorial dates reminded us of the labours of the great spiritual heroes of Orthodoxy whose example we are called upon to follow. We also marked the ecclesiastical and public celebration of the 625th anniversary of the Battle of Kulikovo Field, which began the liberation of Russia from the heavy yoke of foreign captivity, the rebirth of our statehood and the gathering into one of the then hitherto scattered Russian lands.

In the past year the fraternal dialogue with representatives of the Russian Church Abroad continued. Testimony to this was the presence in our homeland of the relics of the martyred Grand Princess St. Elizabeth and the nun St. Barbara. We also welcomed the coming to Russia of many other holy objects which were venerated by thousands of Orthodox Christians. Let us give thanks to the most gracious Lord for this mercy which inspires us to strengthen the unity of Holy Orthodoxy.

Through the grace of God this past year I managed to visit the Yekaterinburg, Kazan, Yaroslavl, Kaluga, Nizhny Novgorod, St. Petersburg, Baku and Tula dioceses of our Church, as well as the Valaam Monastery of the Transfiguration of Our Saviour and other God-protected monastic houses. Everywhere I saw a multitude at prayer and labouring for the Church whose zeal for the Lord is becoming the sure foundation for the rebirth of Orthodoxy in Russia.

In June of this past year the Lord vouchsafed me to celebrate the fifteenth anniversary of my Patriarchal ministry. In receiving your congratulations, so dear to me and speaking so much to my heart, I ever more deeply came to realize how much your support and your prayers mean to me. Again and again I turn to you, your Graces the archpastors, esteemed pastors, all-honourable monks and nuns, all children of the Church, with words of deep and sincere gratitude. May the Lord reward you a hundred-fold and 'make you complete in every good work to do His will' (Heb 13:21).

Once more I congratulate you, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, on the great and saving feast of the Nativity of Christ and the forthcoming New Year. May God's gracious will, announced by the angels in Bethlehem, accompany each one of us in our lives, helping us to overcome difficulties and hardships. As the apostle says, 'mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you' (Jude 1:2). Amen.

+ALEXIS, Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus'

Dec. 25, 2005 / Jan. 7, 2006

Рождественское Послание Святейшего Патриарха Московского и всея Руси АЛЕКСИЯ II архипастырям, пастырям, монашествующим и всем верным чадам Русской Православной Церкви.

Возсиял еси, Христе, от Девы,
разумное Солнце Правды, и звезда Тя показа,
в вертепе вмещающаяся невместимаго.
Волхвы наставил еси на поклонение Твое,
с ними же Тя величаем: Жизнодавче, слава Тебе!

(Из последования великой вечерни праздника Рождества Христова)

Возлюбленные о Господе Преосвященные архипастыри, честное пресвитерство, во Христе диаконство, боголюбивые иноки и инокини, благочестивые миряне - верные чада Русской Православной Церкви! В сей святой и всерадостный день с отеческой любовью поздравляю всех вас с великим и светлым праздником Рождества Христова!

Снова святые рождественские дни обращают ко Господу наши умы и сердца, служат нашему духовному назиданию, обновляют в нас переживание единства с Богом и друг с другом в Церкви Христовой, созданной и возглавляемой Вочело-вечившимся Сыном Божиим. Пребывая в молитвенном созерцании у Вифлеемских яслей, мы вновь и вновь испытываем себя: как отвечаем мы на любовь Господа, пославшего Сына Своего Единородного, «дабы всякий верующий в Него, не погиб, но имел жизнь вечную» (Ин. 3, 16)? Что делаем для того, чтобы невечерний свет Вифлеемской звезды сиял не только для нас, но и для наших ближних? С кем мы в эту святую ночь - с пастухами ли? С волхвами ли? Или весть о чуде Боговоплощения повергает нас в смущение и смятение? Простые люди - пастухи первыми почтили родившегося Богомладенца. Волхвы, доселе не знавшие Истинного Бога, принесли Ему драгоценные дары. Те же, кто мнили себя духовно зрячими, не смогли уразуметь дня посещения Господня.

Если ваши сердца озаряет в эти святые дни простая, безыскусная радость вифлеемских пастухов, если ваши ум и знания ведут вас вслед за Рождественской звездой - радуясь и благодарю за вас Всемилостивого Господа. Если же привязанность к земным радостям и боязнь их потерять побуждают вас гнать из своего сердца Христа, не верьте лукавым наветам извечного лжеца и человекоубийцы диавола. Ибо нет в мире такой радо-

сти, какую дает людям Родившийся сегодня, - как говорит Апостол, «не видел того глаз, не слышало ухо, и не приходило то на сердце человеку, что приготовил Бог любящим Его» (1 Кор. 2, 9).

Окружающий мир все чаще зовет нас поклониться идолам славы, власти, достатка, удовольствий. Но Церковь знает: этот путь ведет в никуда. Идя по нему, мы получим не свободу, но рабство, не радость, но разочарование, не силу, но разрушение, не жизнь, но смерть. Следуя же за Христом, за волхвами и пастухами, которые, не раздумывая, поверили в Него, мы не только сами обретем истинное благо, но сможем просветить весь мир - словом, делом, молитвой. К этому призываю всех вас - и чад церковных, и тех, кто еще находится на пути к храму и ко Христу. Придите, дорогие мои, вместе почтим Богомладенца, принося Ему в дар нашу жизнь, нашу веру, нашу решимость дерзновенно и неленостно трудиться во имя Его, ради блага Церкви и всех людей, нуждающихся в нашей помощи.

Следуя наставлению святителя Амвросия Медиоланского, «встречая день Рождества Господа нашего, очистим себя, братия, от всякой скверны грехов, наполним сокровищницы Его различными дарами, дабы в этот святой день было чем утешить странников, облегчить скорби вдовиц и одеть нищих». Так соединим же наши усилия, чтобы радость Рождества Христова вошла в каждый дом, коснулась сердца и души каждого человека!

Дорогие мои! Прошедший 2005 год принес Русской Церкви много милостей от Всещедрого Господа. Православная вера возродилась по всей земле нашей, даже в самых отдаленных ее уголках, и в этом я вижу добрый плод просветительских трудов иерархов, духовенства и мирян. Верю, что труды эти не останутся без Божия благословения.

Радея о благе каждого человека и всего российского общества, Церковь трудится рука об руку с государственной властью, светским обществом, христианами других исповеданий, людьми иных вер и убеждений. И пусть в нашей жизни остается немало трудностей и нестроений - сила Божия, не раз явленная на народе нашем, вселяет в нас великую надежду на жизнь благоденственную и мирную «во всяком благочестии и чистоте» (1 Тим. 2, 2).

Особо хотел бы обратиться к архипастырям, пастырям и пастве православной Украины. Помните, дорогие мои, что Святая Мать-Церковь с любовью объедает каждого из вас. Будем крепить нашу общность в молитве, доброделании и попечении о благе церковном. Верю: совместными трудами мы победим все расколы и разделения и навеки останемся братьями и сестрами во Христе Иисусе, ибо мы крещены в одной купели и призваны к единому Божию Царству.

В истекшем году вместе со всем народом России Церковь отпраздновала 60-летие Победы в Великой Отечественной войне. Будем же твердо хранить то, что создали и защитили наши предки. Пусть их свершения вдохновляют молодежь на беззаветное, жертвенное служение Отчизне.

Состоялись общецерковные торжества по случаю 450-летия Казанской епархии, 450-летия преставления преподобного Нила Столобенского, 300-летия Православия на Камчатке. Эти памятные даты напомнили нам о трудах великих подвижников Православия, примеру которых мы призваны следовать. Мы совершили также церковно-общественное празднование 625-летнего юбилея Куликовской битвы, положившей начало освобождению Руси от тяжкого иноземного пленения, возрождению нашей государственности и собиранию воедино дотолле разрозненных русских земель.

В прошедшем году продолжался братский диалог с представителями Русской Зарубежной Церкви. Свидетельством этого стало пребывание в нашем Отечестве мощей преподобномучениц великой княгини Елисаветы и инокини Варвары. Также нас посетили и многие другие святыни, которым поклонились

тысячи православных христиан. Возблагодарим Всеблагого Господа за эту милость, вдохновляющую нас на укрепление единства Святого Православия.

Божией милостью мне довелось в минувший год посетить Екатеринодарскую, Казанскую, Ярославскую, Калужскую, Нижегородскую, Санкт-Петербургскую, Бакинскую, Тульскую епархии нашей Церкви, а также Спасо-Преображенский Валаамский монастырь и другие богоспасаемые иноческие обители. Везде я видел множество молящихся и тружеников церковных, чья ревность о Господе становится крепким основанием возрождения Православия на Руси.

В июне прошедшего года Господь сподобил меня отметить 15-летие патриаршего служения. Принимая ваши поздравления, столь дорогие для меня и столь много говорящие моему сердцу, я еще глубже осознал, как много значит для меня ваша поддержка, ваши молитвы. Снова и снова обращаюсь к вам, Пресвященные архи-пастыри, досточтимые пастыри, всечестные иноки и инокини, все чада церковные, со словами глубокой и искренней благодарности. Господь да воздаст вам сторицей и «да усовершит вас во всяком добром деле, к исполнению воли Его» (Евр. 13,21).

Еще раз поздравляю вас, дорогие о Христе братья и сестры, с великим, спасительным праздником Рождества Христова и наступающим новолетием! Благоволение Божие, возвещенное в Вифлееме Ангелами, да сопутствует в жизни каждому из вас, помогая преодолевать трудности и невзгоды. По слову апостольскому, «милость вам и мир и любовь да умножатся» (Иуд. 1,2). Аминь.

**+АЛЕКСИЙ,
ПАТРИАРХ МОСКОВСКИЙ И ВСЕЯ РУСИ**

Nativity Address of the Administrator of the Patriarchal Parishes in the USA The Vicar of His Holiness Patriarch ALEXY II of Moscow and All Russia MERCURIUS, Bishop of Zارايسк.

**Beloved in the Lord brothers and sisters!
Venerable pastors, monastics and laity!**

“Having beheld a strange Nativity, and having laid aside all earthly cares, let us lift up our hearts. For this reason the Most High appeared, to draw us to Himself”, - with these words of the Akathist the Church glorifies today’s feast. With these words She calls us to comprehend this critical event in human history, the history, of which we are a part.

When people immersed into the quiet of night sleep; when only a few shepherds were keeping vigil and a few magi were contemplating the destiny of the world, God entered our life as one of us, having not disturbed the peace of the human race. But the very nature, which He created, which deviated from God through sin and nevertheless genetically remembered – it trembled and shuddered, beholding the angelic hosts surrounding the Bethlehem cave, where “the Lord, that keeps everything in His hand” rested.

And even up till today God enters human life in the same fashion. If the heart of a man is open to Him to enter, He comes quietly and secretly, but in power.

All hymns, all prayers that the Church now sings, reminds us of the joy that Heaven descended to earth. But even more uplifting is the fulfillment of prophecies that through His advent God restored the possibility for the earth-born to ascend to Heaven! He granted to the earth-born the heavenly glory.

During these joyous days let us also remember the responsibility that is placed upon each and every one of us, which have assumed the Christian rank through the Sacrament of Baptism. For the glory of our Savior, granted to us according to the unspoken love and mercy of God, abides only upon those who are worthy and those who strive to carefully preserve it.

May the words of St. Philaret (Drozdov), the great preacher and ardent archpastor of the Russian Church, shine to us as the star of Bethlehem, illumining all the walks of our earthly life and guiding us toward salvation: “Beware, lest your deeds at home offend the Lord, Whom you glo-

rify with the words of your mouths in church. For He says: I will glorify only those, who glorify me; and the ones who offend Me, will be dishonored.”

I prayerfully wish you, my dear ones, the joy of this triumphant celebration! For this is the spiritual triumph, which renews our life through the grace of the Holy Spirit.

+Mercurius, Bishop of Zارايسк

**Возлюбленные о Господе братья и сестры!
Досточтимые пастыри, монашествующие и миряне!**

«Странное Рождество видевшее, устранимся мира, ум на небеса преложше; сего бо ради высокий Бог на землю сниде, да нас к высоте превлечет», - такими словами акафиста воспевают Церковь торжество настоящего дня. Этими словами Она призывает нас к осмыслению события, послужившего переломным моментом общечеловеческой истории. Той истории – от которой мы не отлучены, но которой причастны, частью которой является и наша жизнь.

В ночи, когда люди погрузились в сонный покой, когда удел бодрствования был делом немногих пастырей и размышляющих над судьбами мира мудрецов, Бог вошел в нашу жизнь как один из нас, не нарушив ничем покоя человеческого рода. Он пришел в жизнь людей, естественным образом приняв плоть, как обычный человек. Но природа, сотворенная Им, уклонившаяся от Бога через грех, помнила его генетически – она востре-петала и содрогнулась, видя ангельские воинства трепетно окружавшие Вифлеемскую пещеру, где почивал «содержай вся рукою Своею Годподь».

Так и донныне Бог приходит в человеческую жизнь. Приходит тихо и прикровенно, но в силе и действии, если сердце человека открыто для того, чтобы Бог вошел в него.

Все песнопения, все молитвы, предлагаемые по случаю сего дня Церковью, напоминают нам о той радости, что Небо снизошло на землю. Но не меньшей, а еще большей радо-

стью для нас должно быть исполнение пророчеств, что Бог восстановил через Свое пришествие в мир возможность и земнородным восходить на Небо! Он даровал земным Свою славу небесную.

Будем помнить в дни нашей радости и о той ответственности, которая возлагается на каждого из нас, принявших звание христианское в купели святого Крещения. Так как слава Спасителю нашего, дарованная нам по неизреченной любви и милости Божией, почивает только на достойных и трепетно сохраняющих ее.

И пусть слова святителя Филарета (Дроздова), великого проповедника и ревностного архипастыря Русской Церкви, будут для нас ныне сиять подобно звезде Вифлеемской, озаряя пути нашего земного странствия путями спасения: «Берегитесь, чтобы Бога, Спасителя своего, прославляемого словом в храме, не оскорбить делами в доме. *Зане токмо прославляющих Мя прославлю, - говорит Он, - и уничижаяй Мя бесчестен будет* (1 Цар. 2: 30).

Молитвенно желаю вам, дорогие мои, радости сего Торжества! Духовного торжества, обновляющего нашу жизнь благодатью Святаго Духа!

+Меркурий, епископ Зарайский.

Prayers by the Lake

XXVI

St. Nikolai Velimirovich

(submitted by Martha Elliott)

Arise all you creatures and serve the Living Lord who cares about you. Worship Him and serve Him, for no one greater than He has visited you in this vale of fear and tears.

Servants come and make themselves lords. The Lord came and made Himself a servant. Servile lords strive to lord it over as many people and creatures as possible, while the lordly Servant strives to serve as many people and creatures as possible.

Arise, O lilies of the field, and give off your fragrance, for His holy mouth mentioned your name.

Arise, O stone and rock, and worship Him, for His holy feet walked over you.

Arise, O desert, and rejoice, for He sanctified you with His longest and most mysterious prayers.

Arise, O wheat and grapevine, for He blessed you especially among all created things. Arise and bless Him.

Arise, O fish, and glorify the Lord, for He was hungry and you nourished Him.

Arise, O water and skies, and serve Him, for by His power He cleansed you and calmed you.

Arise, O sycamore tree, and clothe yourself in silk, for in you He saw a sinner and saved him.

Arise, O sheep and oxen, and be filled with awe, for in your lowly stable He was born.

Arise, O birds, and sing, for He has raised you up as an example for men.

Arise, O oil, and burn before His throne, for when He was anointed with you He felt joy and saved a sinful woman.

Arise, O thorns and reed, and be filled with shame, for you caused Him pain.

Arise, O iron and wood, and repent, for even unwillingly you caused Him torments on the cross.

Arise, inhabitants of cities, and weep, for you did not believe in Him.

Arise, O leaders of the people, and sprinkle yourselves with ashes, for you passed judgment over Him.

Arise, O paupers, and embrace Him, for He is your wealth.

Arise O kings, and lay down your crowns before Him, for He alone has taught you true wisdom concerning primacy and leadership.

Arise, O sinners, and start sobbing before Him, for only His hand does not cast a stone at you.

Arise, O righteous, and be vigilant, for your Leader is coming to you.

Arise, all you stars, and begin to dance, for your Lightgiver goes to visit you.

Arise, O universe, and begin to hum the Lord's hymn, for the living Lord who cares about you has entered you.

Christ is Born ! Glorify Him ! Христос Раждается ! Славите Его !

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

With all sincerity, love and joy, I greet all of you on this glorious and festive day, the Nativity of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ. Once again, we have waited patiently, with prayers and fasting for the Coming of the Messiah – that He may come into our world, into our life, into our hearts. Now the time has come for us to celebrate and praise the great condescension of the almighty God to our world in the Christ child.

Today the Lord is born, the life and salvation of mankind; today a reconciliation is made of Divinity to humanity, and of humanity to Divinity; today all creation has leapt for joy; those above sent toward those below; and those below towards those above; today occurred the death of darkness and the life of humanity; today a way was made toward God for man and a way for God into the soul (St. Macarius the Great).

Often times we mistakenly think that God is far from us, that He doesn't see our suffering or feel our pain or hear our cries; while others may run to Him only in times of extreme necessity, when it is convenient for us, or may trust in our own abilities and strength, following the norms of our secularistic society.

However, today's great feast brings joy and consolation to those who struggle, for our Lord has taken to Himself our nature. He has put on our suffering, pain and sorrow; He has accepted

our sicknesses, weaknesses and limitations. He has come into our world so that we might be lifted up out of our woes and difficulties. He has completely fulfilled the words of Isaiah – "God is with us." He will never abandon us, for He is "with us unto the end of the age" (Matt. 28: 20).

And today our Lord again invites to the manger those who are caught up with the cares and troubles of this world, those who find themselves blinded by the vanity of this materialistic and secular society, those who put human reason above spiritual wisdom and who seek pleasures of this world at the expense of the soul "to come and see" (John 1:39). Christ comes into our world so that we might be raised out of the world, so that we may not be led astray by the foolishness of this world. He has given Himself to us so that by following His example of pure sacrifice we may give in loving return our entire being, every day, hour and minute, every talent and ability, all of our strength and will to God. Today God gives of Himself so that we may give of ourselves to God.

Therefore, let us rejoice and be glad, let us seek the peace of God and bring hope and love to one another all the days of our life. May the blessing of the Lord and Savior who has come down to earth 'for us men and for our salvation' abide with all of us. Christ is born! Glorify Him!

**With love in the Christ Child,
Fr. John Vass**

Theophany – Baptism of our Lord / Богоявление – Крещение Господня

Wednesday, January 18 – 7:00 PM <i>All Night Vigil / Всенощное Бдение</i>	Services to be held at our Chapel <i>Эти службы будут совершены в часовне</i> 6480 Elibank Drive, Elkridge, MD. 21076
Thursday, January 19 – 9:00 AM <i>Liturgy & Great Blessing of Waters</i> <i>Литургия и великое освящение воды</i>	
Sunday, January 22 – 10:00 AM <i>Liturgy & Great Blessing of Waters</i> <i>Литургия и великое освящение воды</i>	Divine Liturgy at our Church 1723 E. Fairmount Ave., Baltimore, 21231

The Voice is a parish newsletter-journal of Holy Trinity Russian Orthodox Church (1723 East Fairmount Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21231). *The Voice* is prepared and distributed by the pastor and parishioners of Holy Trinity Russian Orthodox Church. Please forward any questions to 410-276-6171.