



Christ is Born!

2018

“Thy Nativity, O Christ our God, has shone upon the world with the light of knowledge: for thereby they who adored the stars through a star were taught to worship Thee, the Sun of Righteousness, and to know Thee the Dayspring from on high. O Lord, glory be to Thee!” The Apolytikion of Christmas

Dear Parishioners,

“For nothing done by God from the beginning of time was more beneficial to all or more divine than Christ’s nativity, which we celebrate today.” May this Christmas greeting match the zealous rhetoric of St. Gregory Palamas.

What light of knowledge has shone upon the world? The mystery of the incarnation of the Word of God taking on flesh from the Virgin Mary is the light of knowledge. Jesus speaking in the Gospel of John says, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.” (John 8:12) In the prologue of the Gospel of John it is said about Jesus, “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” (John 1:4) In the first hymn of the Great Vespers of Christmas the following is chanted, “For what He was, He has remained, true God: and what He was not, He has taken upon Himself, becoming man through love for mankind.” It is this event of salvation that is the light that has shone upon the world.

Through the events of the incarnation and the birth of Christ, Jesus teaches “everyone that humility is the road which leads upwards, setting forth today Himself as an example before men and holy angels alike.” (St. Gregory) This humility is reflected in the following story of a humble priest.

There was a humble monk priest who was illiterate and serving in a village. He often made many mistakes during the Divine Liturgy. However, everyone flocked to his church. This brought about the jealousy of some well-educated archimandrites who were baffled, as to why the people were flocking to the Divine Liturgy of the illiterate monk priest and not to them, who had theological degrees and a better presentation of the services. These clergymen asked the bishop to go and visit the monk priest in the village so that the bishop may correct the pious priest monk’s ways. Upon the bishop arriving for the service unannounced, the priest before starting the service apologized for the mistakes that he may make. When the priest came to the prayer of the Great Entrance, the bishop witnessed tears coming down the face of the priest. When it came time for the descent of the Holy Spirit to make the bread and wine the Body and Blood of Christ, a light appeared around the face of the priest. After the Divine Liturgy, the bishop got on his knees and asked the priest for his forgiveness. The priest out of humility said to the bishop I must ask for your forgiveness, and said “why are you asking for my forgiveness?” The bishop replied, “I have never seen this from any other priest.” The pious monk-priest responded out of purity and with emphasis, “the other priests do not see this light?” Ending again with other words of St. Gregory, “He who is by nature Lord of all is now ranked with the servants and enrolled with them, clearly making humble service to others no less honorable than the exercise of lordship.”

As haughtiness, arrogance and conceit try to take root in the governance of today’s world, may this powerful and sublime virtue of humility reign in the heart, mind and soul of you and your family!

Merry Christmas,

Fr. John K. Lardas

Protopresbyter

Let Us Celebrate His Birth!