

# Christ Is Born!

"...And the Whole of Creation Rejoices."



"And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." (Luke 2:7).

Dear Parishioners,

As we prepare to celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, many hospitals are lacking rooms because another wave of COVID-19 is spreading across the country and the world. More than 2,000 years after the birth of Christ, people seeking help and comfort are also facing the possibility of "no room for them."

Joseph, together with Mary, who was nine months pregnant, had to travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem to be counted in the Roman census. It was indeed a difficult journey for a woman about to give birth. Regarding the importance of the Christ Child being born in Bethlehem, there are a few important biblical and theological facts to consider.

Bethlehem means the "City of Bread". The Christ, Jesus, is the bread of life. "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst." (John 6:35) Bethlehem is also the city of David, from whose lineage would come forth the Christ. In the Book of Ruth of the Old Testament, Ruth (a gentile) returns to Bethlehem with her widowed mother-in-law. It is here where she will meet Boaz and they will become the great-grandparents of King David. When the Wise Men had come to Jerusalem searching for the Christ who was born, King Herod, desperate to find his "supposed usurper" asked all the wise men and priests of the people from where the Christ would be born. Their response based on the prophecies of the Old Testament was, "in Bethlehem in Judea!" As the story of the birth of Jesus unfolds before our eyes, we see that Joseph and Mary cannot find a place to rest for Mary to give birth to the Child. There was no room for them!

Because there was no room for Mary and Joseph in the inn, the Lord was born amongst the beasts in the manger. Addressing the spiritual meaning in this act, St. Cyril of Alexandria says, "Therefore He is placed like fodder in a manger, that we, having left off our bestial life, might mount up to that degree of intelligence which befits man's nature."

As this ancient story of salvation has been told year after year, for thousands of years, the events of this story resonate into today's society. Is there room in the inn of our minds, our hearts and our souls for the birth of love, for the birth of the Son of God, for the birth of salvation? It seems that the person of today's world is too full of other things to make room for God. The mind is so addicted to the electronic technology of today, that no one has the time for the most important information there is, the knowledge of God, through the reading of the Holy Scriptures! St. Paul uplifted Timothy for his knowledge of the scriptures: "And that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." (1Tim. 3:15)

The heart is so much in love with the perishable idols of today's world, there is little room left to love God. "But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first." (Rev. 2:4)

The soul has become so bloated with every ideology and with political "isms", it does not have the ability to be fed and nourished on the truth, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matthew 6:21)

During these most historical of times, making room for one another is more important than ever. With some of our parishioners being beset with the falling asleep of a loved one, with many parishioners facing economic and financial uncertainties, within our neighborhoods with the possibility of people facing food insecurity, may these blessed days of Christmas and Epiphany keep our hearts attuned to the needs of others and to our faith in God. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength."

May you have a blessed Christmas and New Year's, filled with the fullness of life which God has granted unto us abundantly!

In Christ, Fr. John K. Lardas  
Protosyner

“καὶ ἔτεκεν τὸν υἱὸν αὐτῆς τὸν πρωτότοκον· καὶ ἐσπαργάνωσεν αὐτὸν καὶ ἀνέκλινεν αὐτὸν ἐν τῇ φάτνῃ, διότι οὐκ ἦν αὐτοῖς τόπος ἐν τῷ καταλύματι.” (Λουκᾶν 2:7)

Αγαπητοὶ Ενορίτες,

Καθὼς ετοιμαζόμαστε νὰ γιορτάσουμε τὴ γέννηση τοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ Σωτῆρα τοῦ κόσμου, εἶναι τελείως συμπτωματικὸ, ποῦ μετὰ ἀπὸ 2000 χρόνια καὶ παραπάνω, τὰ νοσοκομεῖα μας δὲν ἔχουν διαθέσιμα κρεβάτια γιὰ τοὺς ἀσθενεῖς τοὺς, καθὼς ἡ Ἀμερική καὶ ὁλόκληρος ὁ κόσμος ἀντιμετωπίζουν τὸ δεῦτερο κύμα τῆς πανδημίας τοῦ Κορονοϊοῦ.

Ὁ Ἰωσήφ, μαζί με τὴν Μαρία ποῦ εἶναι ἐγκυὸς 9 μηνῶν, πρέπει νὰ ταξιδέψουν ἀπὸ τὴν Ναζαρέτ μέχρι τὴν Βηθλεέμ γιὰ νὰ μπορέσουν νὰ μετρηθοῦν καὶ νὰ υπολογιστοῦν στὴ Ρωμαϊκὴ ἀπογραφή ποῦ διεξαγόταν ἐκεῖνη τὴν ἐποχὴ. Τὸ ταξίδι αὐτὸ φυσικὰ, γιὰ μιὰ γυναῖκα ἐτοιμὴ νὰ γεννήσῃ ἦταν κοπιαστικὸ. Υπάρχουν μερικὰ σημαντικὰ βιβλικὰ καὶ θεολογικὰ γεγονότα ποῦ δίνουν μεγάλη σημασία στὴ γέννηση τοῦ Θεοῦ βρέφους στὴ συγκεκριμένη πόλη τῆς Βηθλεέμ. Ὁ ὄρος Βηθλεέμ σημαίνει ἡ πόλη τοῦ ἄρτου. Ὁ Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς, εἶναι ὁ ἄρτος τῆς ζωῆς. “Ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ἄρτος τῆς ζωῆς· ὁ ἐρχόμενος πρὸς με οὐ μὴ πεινάσῃ, καὶ ὁ πιστεύων εἰς ἐμὲ οὐ μὴ διψήσῃ πώποτε.” (Ἰωάννην 6:35) Ἡ Βηθλεέμ εἶναι ἐπίσης ἡ πόλη τοῦ Δαβὶδ, ἀπ’ ὅπου εἶναι καὶ ἡ καταγωγὴ τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Ἀπὸ τὸ Βιβλίον τῆς Ρουθ τῆς Παλαιᾶς Διαθήκης, ἡ Ρουθ (μιὰ εἰδωλολάτρισσα) ἐπιστρέφει στὴ Βηθλεέμ μαζί με τὴν χήρα πεθερὰ τῆς. Ἐδῶ εἶναι ποῦ θὰ συναντήσῃ τὸν Μπόαζ καὶ ὅπου θὰ γίνων οἱ προπαππούδες τοῦ Βασιλιά Δαβὶδ. Ὅταν οἱ μάγοι ἔφτασαν στα Ἱεροσόλυμα, ψάχνοντας τὸν Χριστὸ ποῦ εἶχε μόλις γεννηθεῖ, ὁ Ἡρώδης τοῦ βασιλέως, ἀποφασισμένος νὰ βρεῖ τὸ θεωρημένο σφετεριστὴ τοῦ “συναγαγὼν πάντας τοὺς ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ γραμματεῖς τοῦ λαοῦ ἐπυνθάνετο παρ’ αὐτῶν ποῦ ὁ Χριστὸς γεννᾶται. οἱ δὲ εἶπον αὐτῷ· Ἐν Βηθλεέμ τῆς Ἰουδαίας.” (Ματθαῖον 2:4~5) Καθὼς ἡ ἱστορία τῆς γέννησης τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐξελίσσεται μπροστὰ στα μάτια μας, βλέπουμε ὅτι ὁ Ἰωσήφ καὶ ἡ Μαρία δὲν μποροῦν νὰ βροῦν τόπο νὰ ξεκουραστοῦν ἔτσι ὥστε νὰ γεννηθεῖ τὸ παιδί. Δὲν υπήρχε χώρος ποῦθενά γιὰ αὐτοὺς.

Ἡ πράξη αὐτὴ εἶχε μεγάλο νόημα γιὰ τὸν Ἅγιος Κύριλλο τῆς Ἀλεξάνδρειας, ὁ ὁποῖος λέει τὰ ἀκόλουθα, “Ἐπομένως, τὸ Ἅγιο βρέφος τοποθετεῖται ὡς γόνιμο ἔδαφος πάνω στὴ γῆ καὶ εμεῖς, καθὼς ἐγκαταλείπουμε τὴν υλικὴ ζωὴ, προχωράμε πρὸς τὸ βάθος τῆς νοημοσύνης καὶ τῆς διανοητικῆς διαφώτισης, ὅπως καὶ ἀρμόζει στὴν ἀνθρώπινὴ μας φύση.

Καθὼς αὐτὸ τὸ ἀρχαῖο γεγονός τῆς σωτηρίας ἐπαναλαμβάνεται κάθε χρόνο, γιὰ χιλιάδες χρόνια, ἡ ἀναχρονιστικὴ τοποθεσία εἶναι ἀκόμα πιο ἐπίκαιρη στὴ σημερινὴ κοινωνία. Υπάρχει χώρος στο πανδοχεῖο τοῦ μυαλοῦ μας, τῆς καρδιάς καὶ τῆς ψυχῆς μας γιὰ τὴν γέννηση τῆς ἀγάπης, γιὰ τὴν γέννηση τοῦ Υἱοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ, γιὰ τὴν γέννηση τῆς σωτηρίας; Φαίνεται πως ὁ ἄνθρωπος τοῦ σημερινοῦ κόσμου εἶναι πολὺ γεμάτος γιὰ νὰ ἀφεθεῖ στὸν Θεό. Τὸ μυαλό, ἐθισμένο τόσο στὴν ἠλεκτρονικὴ τεχνολογία τῆς σημερινῆς ἐποχῆς, ἔχει κορεστεῖ στο ἔπαρκο με κίνητρα ποῦ κανένας δὲν ἔχει τὸν χρόνο νὰ ἀσχοληθεῖ με τὶς πιο σημαντικὲς πληροφορίες ποῦ υπάρχουν, μέσα στὴ Βίβλο! Ὁ Ἅγιος Παῦλος ἀνυψώνει τὸν Τιμόθεο γιὰ τὶς γνώσεις τοῦ Ἱερογρᾶφου, “καὶ ὅτι ἀπὸ βρέφους τὰ ἱερὰ γράμματα οἶδας, τὰ δυνάμενά σε σοφίσαι εἰς σωτηρίαν διὰ πίστεως τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.” (2Τιμοθεόν 3:15) Ἡ καρδιά εἶναι τόσο ἐρωτευμένη με τὰ εὐπαθῆ εἰδῶλα τοῦ κόσμου, ποῦ ὑπάρχει πολὺ λίγος χώρος γιὰ τὴν ἀγάπη πρὸς τὸ Θεό. “ἀλλὰ ἔχω κατὰ σοῦ, ὅτι τὴν ἀγάπην σου τὴν πρώτην ἀφῆκας. .” (Ἀποκάλυψις 2:4) Ἡ ψυχὴ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου εἶναι πρησμένη με κάθε εἶδος ἰδεολογίας καὶ πολιτικῆς ποῦ ἡ ἀλήθεια τοῦ Θεοῦ μοιάζει ἀσήμαντη. “Ὅπου γὰρ ἐστὶν ὁ θησαυρὸς ὑμῶν, ἐκεῖ ἔσται καὶ ἡ καρδιά ὑμῶν. (Ματθαῖον 6:21)

Τὸ νὰ βοηθᾶ ὁ καθένας τὸν συνάνθρωπό του εἶναι πιο σημαντικό σήμερα ἀπὸ ποτέ. Με μερικοὺς ἐνορίτες ποῦ ἔχουν χάσει τοὺς ἀγαπημένους τοὺς, με ἐνορίτες ποῦ ἔχουν οικονομικὲς ἀβεβαιότητες, με τὴν ἀνασφάλεια ποῦ αἰσθάνονται γείτονες με τὶς γειτονιές μας ὅσον ἀφορᾶ τὴν ἔλλειψη τροφίμων, εὐχομαι αὐτές τὶς εὐλογημένες ἡμέρες τῶν Χριστουγέννων καὶ τῶν Θεοφανείων νὰ προσαρμόσουμε τὶς καρδιές μας στὶς ἀνάγκες τῶν ἄλλων καὶ στὴν πίστη μας στὸν Θεό. “Ἀγαπήσεις Κύριον τὸν Θεόν σου ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδιάς σου καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ψυχῆς σου καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς διανοίας σου καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ἰσχύος σου. .” (Μάρκον 12:30)

Εὐλογημένα Χριστούγεννα εὐχομαι σε ὅλους καὶ ὁ Καινούργιος Χρόνος νὰ ἐμπλουτιστεῖ με τὴν ἀφθονὴ πληρότητα τῆς ζωῆς ποῦ ὁ Θεὸς μας ἔχει χαρίσει.

Με Πίστη στὸν Θεὸ καὶ Κύριο,

Πατὴρ Ἰωάννης Κ. Λαρδᾶς  
Πρωτοπρεσβύτερος