Christmas Message from Patriarch KIRILL of Moscow and All Russia



Christmas Message

from Patriarch KIRILL of Moscow and All Russia

to the Archpastors, Pastors, Deacons, Monastics

and All the Faithful Children of the Russian Orthodox Church

Beloved in the Lord archpastors, all-honourable presbyters and deacons, God-loving monks and nuns, dear brothers and sisters,

Today, as the Heavenly and earthly Church in conciliar unity glorifies God Incarnate, I extend my

heartfelt greetings to all of you on the great and radiant feast of the Nativity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Once again we look back at the events that occurred in Bethlehem over two thousand years ago, beholding the meek Infant lying in the manger, surrounded by His Most Pure Mother, the righteous Joseph and the shepherds who were the first to hear the glad tidings of the Saviour coming into the world. We join the heavenly hosts in praising the Most High Creator Who through His Begotten Son granted unto people peace and good will.

St. Gregory the Theologian reveals the very essence of this feast, saying: *It is this which we are celebrating today, the Coming of God to Man... that we might go back to God* (Oration 38). Truly, *the kingdom of heaven is at hand* (Mt 3:2); the long-expected *Shiloh* (Gen 49:10) has come to earth to fulfil the ancient prophecies; *unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given... and his name shall be called... The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace* (Is 9:6).

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you (Jn 14:27), Christ says to us. What kind of peace is it, which the Lord granted unto man and which the angels were singing of at the time of the Saviour's birth? Has there been less enmity or conflicts in the world since then? We hear all around, *Peace, peace; when there is no peace*, as Jeremiah the prophet writes (Jer 8:11). Yet, the true *peace of God* that came down to earth with the Nativity of Christ surpasses *all understanding* (Phil 4:7) and is unaffected by external circumstances or afflictions and hardships of this transient life. This invincible inner peace is in God Himself Who, having become a man like us in all things but sin, is not only active, but visibly present in the human history. *The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth* (Jn 1:14). The Lord is at hand, my beloved, let us never forget that and be of good cheer! In Him is our strength, our firm hope and spiritual comfort in all vicissitudes of life.

Venerating the miracle of the Divine Incarnation in its humble greatness and magnifying the Saviour Who came into the world, we at the same time cannot but be troubled by the ongoing hostilities overshadowing the holy Christmas festivities, for, as St. Paul notes, *whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it* (1 Cor 12:26). In the midst of all the hardships that have befallen the peoples of

the historical Rus' it is of utmost importance for us to demonstrate in deeds our dedication to our Christian vocation and show love for one another. Sometimes it may seem that good is weak and helpless and that the little we do cannot make a difference. But it is not true.

There is an indisputable principle of spiritual life: love is multiplied when we devote ourselves to others, offering our time, financial help or just attention. Thus not only do we transform the world around us, but also find something precious within ourselves. In this simple but effective principle there lies a secret of genuine peace and real happiness that every person strives to achieve. This happiness is not to be found in far-distant lands, as some people think, chasing after illusions of material welfare and a life without sorrows. The true happiness is in sharing love and joy with those around and by good works glorifying God Who became incarnate that *we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly* (cf. Jn 10:10). When we let Christ in and allow Him to act in us, the blessed peace and rest come to reign in our soul (cf. Mt 11:29), and we become partakers of *the kingdom of God which is within us* (cf. Lk 17:21).

Do we want to embrace the Born Lord? If so, let us embrace the afflicted and comfort the suffering. Do we want to touch Christ and be like the wise men from the East bringing the gifts pleasing unto the Divine Infant? If so, let us give our love and care to our fellow human beings, show mercy and help the needy and support those who have lost heart. *Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me* (Mt 25:40), the Saviour says.

St. Ephraim the Syrian calls Christmas *the night of reconcilement that stills all*. Daringly, he exclaims, *In this night that is the meek One's, high or haughty be in it none! In this day of pardoning let us not exact trespasses! In this day of gladnesses let us not spread sadnesses!* (Hymns on the Nativity, 1).

Let us take heed of these amazing words of the "Syrian desert prophet" and open our hearts towards the Lord Who became incarnate for our sake. Let us rejoice, for the King and Lord of the universe Himself came meekly down to earth in order to grant unto us salvation and eternal life. So, responding with gratitude to the great love of the Maker, let us sanctify our souls by patiently enduring ordeals, as well as by heartfelt prayer and good works to the glory of God.

Once again I extend my felicitations to all of you, my dears, on the radiant feast of the Nativity of Christ, wishing you strength in body and spirit and generous help from the Divine Infant Jesus, and wishing unceasing joy and welfare to your families. May the Creator, Lover of mankind, the True Lord of history, show His mercy on the peoples of the Holy Rus' and bless us all with peace so that *with one mouth and one heart* we give praise to the Incarnate Saviour, bearing an earnest witness that *God is with us*!

+KIRILL

PATRIARCH OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA

Christmas

2022/2023

Moscow

Patriarchal message is also available in other languages:

Arabic

Cebuano

French

Greek

Indonesian

Italian

Khmer

Korean

Russian

Simplified Chinese

Thai

Traditional Chinese

Source: https://mospat.ru/en/news/89921/