

DEARLY BELOVED: CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM! CHRISTOS RAŽDAJETSJA! SLAVITE JEHO! ХРІСТОС СЕ РОДИ! HRISTOS S-A NĂSCUT! PROSLĂVIȚI-L!

IN THE BEGINNING GOD PROMISED ABRAHAM THAT IN HIM, ABRAHAM, ALL NATIONS WOULD BE BLESSED. THE PROPHET MICAH PROCLAIMED THAT OUT OF LITTLE, INSIGNIFICANT BETHLEHEM IN THE LAND OF JUDAH WOULD COME THE ONE TO BE RULER OF ISRAEL TO EVERLASTING. AND ISAIAH THE PROPHET FORETOLD THE SIGN OF A VIRGIN WHO WOULD BEAR A SON WHO WOULD BE CALLED EMMANUEL, A NAME MEANING “GOD WITH US.” “IN MANY AND VARIOUS WAYS GOD SPOKE OF OLD TO OUR FATHERS BY THE PROPHETS; BUT IN THESE LAST DAYS HE HAS SPOKEN TO US BY HIS SON.” (HEBREWS 1:1-2)

TODAY ALL PROPHECIES ARE FULFILLED. WE LOOK FROM THE PROPHETS TO THEIR PROPHECIES FULFILLED IN THE PERSON OF THE SON AND WORD OF GOD MADE FLESH AND BORN FOR US THIS NIGHT. IN BETHLEHEM OF JUDEA THE SON OF GOD IS BORN IN THE FLESH OF THE VIRGIN. SON OF GOD AND SON OF ABRAHAM; IN HIM WE ARE ALL BLESSED.

THE SON OF GOD COMES TO US IN SIMPLICITY. NOT BORN IN A ROYAL PALACE BUT IN THE POVERTY OF THE CAVE. HE COMES NOT AS A VICTOR ON A CHARIOT BUT BORN AS A LITTLE CHILD OF THE VIRGIN. HE COMES TO US IN POVERTY THAT WE IN OUR SPIRITUAL POVERTY MAY BE RAISED UP TO THE HEIGHTS THROUGH HIM. HIS BIRTH IS PROCLAIMED BY ANGELS NOT TO THE WORLD BUT TO THE SHEPHERDS WHO WERE ATTENDING TO THEIR NIGHT’S WORK: WATCHING THEIR SHEEP. HE COMES TO US SO THAT THE DEVIL MIGHT BE CONQUERED THROUGH THE HUMAN NATURE WHICH HE HAD CONQUERED IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN. (LEO, SERMON XXI, ON THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY I) LET

US SINNERS REJOICE AT THE PARDON TO WHICH WE ARE INVITED THROUGH THE SON OF GOD MADE MAN FOR US.

THE VIRGIN TODAY GIVES BIRTH, A BIRTH LIKE NONE OTHER. FOR THE CHILD WHICH TOOK FLESH IN HER IS THE SON OF GOD. AND HER VIRGINITY REMAINS INVIOLOATE. SO WE CALL HER THE THEOTOKOS, THE MOTHER OF GOD. AND IN HER THE PROPHECY OF ISAIAH IS FULFILLED THAT A VIRGIN WOULD BEAR A SON WHOSE NAME WOULD BE EMMANUEL WHICH MEANS “GOD WITH US.” GOD IS WITH US IN THE CHILD BORN ON THIS NIGHT. AS TRUE GOD HE COMES TO US TO SAVE US FROM THE SLAVERY TO SIN, THE SLAVERY TO DEATH. AS MAN HE COMES TO US TO REVEAL THE FULLNESS OF OUR HUMAN NATURE FASHIONED BY GOD.

THE SON OF GOD LOWERS HIMSELF TO TAKE ON OUR HUMANITY. AND BY UNITING IT TO HIS DIVINE NATURE HE EXALTS OUR HUMAN NATURE. HE RAISES US UP WITH HIMSELF IN HIS INCARNATION. HE COMES TO US NOT TO DESTROY BUT TO RE-CREATE. HE COMES NOT TO CONDEMN BUT TO CALL US TO REPENTANCE. HE COMES TO JOIN OUR LIVES TO HIS THAT WE MAY HAVE LIFE IN HIM. HE COMES TO US IN THE VERY NATURE HE CREATED TO REVEAL TO US WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE ARE: SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF THE FATHER THROUGH ADOPTION BY THE HOLY SPIRIT. HE REVEALS OUR TRUE HUMANITY TO US. A HUMANITY NOT IN THRALLDOM TO SIN AND DEATH BUT A HUMANITY LIBERATED BY THE LOVE OF GOD TO LIVE TOWARD GOD ALL THE DAYS OF OUR LIVES. THE SON OF GOD COMES TO US TO SAVE US.

ON THIS NIGHT LET EACH ONE OF US GIVE THANKS TO GOD THE FATHER THROUGH HIS SON, OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST IN THE HOLY SPIRIT. LET US GIVE THANKS THAT HE COMES TO US TO GIVE US LIFE, TO MAKE OF US A NEW CREATION, TO GIVE US NEW

LIFE IN HIMSELF. LET US BE BORN AGAIN ON THIS NIGHT INTO CHRIST, PUTTING OFF THE OLD MAN OF SIN AND PUTTING ON CHRIST HIMSELF WHO COMES TO DWELL IN OUR HEARTS, IN OUR LIVES. LET US WHO HAVE BEEN BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST PUT ON CHRIST IN OUR THOUGHTS, WORDS AND DEEDS. MAY WE ACKNOWLEDGE OUR DIGNITY AS CHILDREN OF GOD BY THE GRACE OF CHRIST. MAY WE REMEMBER THAT WE ARE MEMBERS OF CHRIST'S BODY AND THEREFORE MEMBERS OF EACH OTHER. MAY WE REMEMBER THAT WE HAVE BECOME TEMPLES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

AS WE CELEBRATE THIS FEAST OF OUR LORD JESUS' BIRTH AS THE FAITHFUL OF THE CHURCH OF SAINT NICHOLAS; AS WE WILL REJOICE WITH OUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS, LET US BE RENEWED IN SPIRIT, RECOMMITTED TO LIVING ANEW IN CHRIST THROUGH WHOM ALL GOOD THINGS COME AND IN WHOM FIND GRACE TOGETHER WITH THE FATHER AND THE SPIRIT FROM AGE TO AGE. AMEN.