

**ARCHPASTORAL MESSAGE OF HIS BEATITUDE
METROPOLITAN TIKHON
NATIVITY OF CHRIST 2018**

CHRIST IS BORN ! GLORIFY HIM !

To the Honorable Clergy, Venerable Monastics, and Pious Faithful of the Orthodox Church in America

My beloved brethren and blessed children in the Lord,

Today, the glorious feast of the Nativity in the Flesh of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ shines forth and brings joy to all of creation. The sacred hymnography and iconography of the Church provide words and images to help us interpret the light-filled feast that we celebrate on this day, when He Who *“has adorned the vault of heaven with stars has been well pleased to be born as a babe,”* and He Who *“holds all the earth in the hollow of His hands is laid in a manger of dumb beasts.”*

Holy Tradition offers us the account of the universal hush that took place at the incarnation, expressed in Joseph’s encounter with the stillness of the natural world: birds hanging motionless in flight, men and beasts frozen in their tracks and the waters ceasing their flow. The continuous passage of time and movement of history came to a halt as creation paused in astonishment as the Eternal enters into the heart of time and the pre-eternal God is born as a little child.

This miraculous moment may be unique in history, but it provides us with some inspiration for the manner in which we ought to receive the sacred mystery that we celebrate today. The Apostle Paul writes: *“Be ye thankful”* (Colossians 3:15) and *“In everything give thanks”* (I Thessalonians 5:18). It is in this spirit of gratitude that we should receive this feast.

We live in a world in which the offering of thanksgiving has become a scarce commodity and a rare virtue. In almost every aspect of our human existence, it seems that our first instinct is not to give thanks, but rather to reply, to respond, or to react. At every second of our waking, we are compelled to reply to emails, to texts and to posts. Daily, we respond to our own passionate desires, to every perceived threat and to every offense, and we are drawn to react to every instance of human fallenness, political division and ecclesiastical conflict.

While it may be easier to blame the world for these challenges, we should remember that it is from within our hearts that our actions and attitudes spring forth. We may long for perfection, but we are confronted by our own weaknesses. But even here we should remember, as Saint Barsanuphius reminds us, that *thanksgiving intercedes before God for our weaknesses*. Thanksgiving is not the crown of the perfect but the strength of the weak.

Thanksgiving is what allow us as broken, sorrowful, hurting and frail human beings to join our voices to the rest of creation in singing:

*Make glad, O ye righteous; Greatly rejoice, O ye heavens; Ye mountains dance for joy.
Christ is born; and like the cherubim the Virgin makes a throne, carrying at her bosom God the
Word made flesh.*

Shepherds glorify the new-born Child.

Magi offer the master gifts.

Angels sing praises, saying:

“O Lord past understanding, glory to Thee” (Praises at Matins)

Sincerely yours in the new-born Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a cross symbol followed by the name 'Tikhon' in a cursive script.

+ Tikhon
Archbishop of Washington
Metropolitan of All America and Canada