



IRINEJ

BY THE GRACE OF GOD
BISHOP OF EASTERN AMERICA

GOD'S PEACE — CHRIST IS BORN!

Most beloved clergy and monastics, sons and daughters,
Faithful children of the Diocese of Eastern America and of our Most Holy Church,

*Today the Lord is born, the life and the salvation of humanity.
Today is born He who reconciles Divinity to humanity and humanity to Divinity.
Today all creation leaps for joy.
Those from on high send for those below and those below for the ones above.
Today is born the death of darkness and the life of humanity.
Today is born the path towards God for men and the way of God into the soul.*

St. Macarius the Great (*Homily 52*)

The Nativity of the Divine Christ Child, most beloved, uncovers for humankind the paradox with which, from beginning to end, the New Testament Gospel flows: the infinite God is incarnate in the flesh of a little child! (John 1:14). The Omnipotent One is born in the weaknesses of a newborn infant! The Word cries!

We ask ourselves, has it been sufficiently emphasized how much these truths are profoundly interwoven throughout the rest of the earthly life of Jesus? Some would choose to completely set aside these very axioms of human salvation, as fragments of an outdated belief from the domain of fantasy. Are we embarrassed by the appearance of the Star of Bethlehem? It is precisely that illumination which leads us to the manger of the Newborn Christ, in which lies God, manifest neither through force or violence, rather through a helpless being, fully prepared to surrender Himself to humanity (John 1:29).

The accounts of the birth of Christ are truly inexhaustible. Throughout our lives, indeed, faith in the Incarnate Savior begins with our personal quest for truth. The path which we traverse toward that knowledge leads us directly into the field of God-revealed truths of the Gospel. Therein our heart and mind invisibly will behold holy and miracle-working Divine Grace. The entirety of our being, thereby, modestly and humbly accepts all the unfathomable truths of revelation. In so doing, the perspective of a person of faith becomes the perspective of the Newborn Savior. This is sacred and salvific faith, as well as faith, which Christians are summoned to nurture and develop.

Therefore, dearest faithful, according to the words of St. Macarius the Great, *“today the Lord is born, the life and the salvation of humanity”*. And from this all-encompassing love of the Creator

towards us, *“today is born He who reconciles Divinity to humanity and humanity to Divinity”*. The Lord, through His Only-begotten Son, born before all ages of a Father without a mother, and today in time of a Mother without a father, invites all of us into the communion of His love. This is precisely the fulfillment of the words of St. Macarius of Egypt: *“today all creation leaps for joy”*. It is crucial that we all firmly hold onto that community of His love, i.e., our liturgical community, the one community which is the source of trust and transfiguration. It is the living and tangible iconic Kingdom of Heaven here on earth, among us and in us. In it is, in the warm embrace of a Mother, revealed and given Christ, *a Little Child, the Pre-eternal God!* (Nativity Kontakion).

The Old Testament Prophet Jeremiah announces: *“in the last days you shall ponder these things and understand them clearly”* (Jer. 23:20). To which St. Irenaeus of Lyon adds: *“for every prophecy, before its fulfillment, is full of enigmas and ambiguities for humankind. But when the time has arrived, and the prediction has come to pass, then the prophecies have a clear and certain exposition. And for this reason, indeed, when at this present time the law is read... by the Christians, it is a treasure, hid indeed in a field, but brought to light by the cross of Christ”* (*Adversus Haereses* IV.26:1).

With warm paternal prayers that the Newborn Lord touches the heart of every one of you alike, our dear and beloved faithful. May He abide in the soul of every human being, so that He blesses and enlightens all of us together with the radiance of the cruciform Star of Bethlehem. May He grant us a blessed New Year of salvation illumined by the light of the knowledge of God. Such that the forthcoming Year 2018 may be filled with mutual love, peace and harmony, we invoke upon all of you the blessing and grace of the Holy Night of Christmas, joyfully exclaiming from our heart:

**GOD'S PEACE – CHRIST IS BORN!
INDEED HE IS BORN!**

Given in New York, at Christmas in the year 2017.

Your fervent intercessor before the cradle of the Divine Infant Christ,

+IRINEJ

**BISHOP OF EASTERN AMERICA
THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH**