

**Christmas Message of His Holiness  
Patriarch KIRILL of Moscow and All Russia  
to the Archpastors, Pastors, Monastics and All the Faithful Children  
of the Russian Orthodox Church**

**Your Eminences the archpastors, honourable fathers,  
God-loving monks and nuns, dear brothers and sisters!**

On this radiant and joyful feast of the Nativity in the flesh of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ I cordially greet you all, my dear ones. On this light-bearing night together we prayerfully echo the doxology of the angels, proclaiming 'great joy to all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour' (Lk 2:10-11).

Humanity, which rejected God in the fall, discovers anew the chance to be united with its Creator and Provider. The coming of the Son of God into the world is his voluntary self-abnegation, ready to descend to a tortuous and shameful 'death – even death on the cross' (Phil 2:8). God is born in the flesh so that he may manifest his love to people and help every person willing to listen to his call to find the fullness of life.

That is why today's feast grants to us the immutable hope of help from above in the most complex situations of our life. God, who has not abandoned his creation and has revealed to it the way to eternity, is revealed to us in the Infant Christ, a defenseless child in need of care and love.

All of us must retain in our hearts this Biblical image. In recalling the Divine Infant lying in a manger, we acquire a firm faith and indestructible hope in Divine Providence leading to the good of every human person. And even if in our life no support remains, if all seems to be unsure and unreliable, we are to realize clearly that the Lord can transform through his gracious power the pain, suffering and poverty of our world into happiness, joy and an abundance of spiritual gifts.

On the feast of the coming of the Saviour the mental gaze of the faithful is turned towards the cradle of Christianity, the Holy Land, which was deemed worthy to be the place of the birth, abode and earthly ministry of the Lord. Today Christ's followers in the countries where the events of sacred history took place are experiencing difficult trials, encounter new threats to the existence of centuries-old spiritual traditions. During these radiant days of the Nativity let us offer up ardent prayers for our brothers in the faith, the guardians of precious holy sites, the inheritors of the tradition of ancient Christianity.

'If one member suffers, all suffer together with it' (1 Cor 12:26). These words of the apostle concern not only the members of a single parish, a single church community. Indeed, they embrace all of the children of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, the Orthodox Church spread throughout the world. Her unity abides not only in a single patristic faith and communion in the sacraments but also in the sharing of hardships together, in sacrificial ministry towards each other, in mutual prayer.

The past year has been difficult in the life of many countries and nations, including those who live in the expanse of historical Russia: many tragic events and cataclysms have proved to be a trial of our faith and steadfastness.

However, today the worst tribulations occur not in the material but in the spiritual realm. The dangers which abide on the physical plane have a negative impact on our physical well-being and comfort. And while making the material aspect of life more complex, they nevertheless cannot do essential harm to the life of the spirit. Yet it is precisely the spiritual dimension which sheds light on the most important and grave challenge to our view of the modern world. This challenge is aimed at the destruction of the sense of morality embedded in our souls by God. Today we are told that the human person is the measure – and sole measure – of truth, that each individual has his own truth and that each individual decides for himself what is good and what is evil. The divine truth, and this means the distinction between good and evil that is founded on this Truth, is being substituted by a moral indifference and permissiveness which destroys

peoples' souls and denies them eternal life. If natural disasters and wars ruin the external structure of life, then moral relativism corrodes one's conscience, making us spiritual invalids, distorts the divine laws of being and breaks the connection between creation and Creator.

We are to resist this danger in the first instance by calling to our help the Most Pure Virgin and the host of God's saints so that through their intercession before the Throne of the 'Sovereign Lord, holy and true' (Rev 6:10), now venerated in the image of the new born Infant, they may beseech for us the strength to combat sin and fight 'against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places' (Eph 6:12). It is important to learn how to recognize the deceits and illusions of earthly well-being in our destructive addictions, in our greedy strivings, in the temptations of advertisements, in the entertainment industry and political propaganda. It is important at all times to listen to the voice of our conscience warning us of the danger of sin, to be able to make our actions fit the commandments of the Gospel.

Now, as always, each Christian is called upon to assert through his everyday actions the dignity of a righteous way of life, to resist consciously moral relativism and the cult of getting rich quick. We are surrounded by a great number of infirm, sick and lonely people. There are also many who out of economic necessity have left their homes in search of a wage and need our care, often finding themselves in a hostile environment. Every pastor and layman is to participate in the social, missionary and public life of the Church. As St. Innocent of Chersonese says: 'It is only in the light of Christ that we can see God, see ourselves and see the world in its true aspect; it is only through the guidance of heavenly Revelation that we can find the path leading to life eternal'.

With those who hope for the consolation of Christ we are to share warmly the joy of today's feast. Each of us can bring the light of the star of Bethlehem to those close to us and far from us – to our colleagues, friends, relatives and neighbours.

In the past year, working with the state authorities, public organizations and the representatives of the business community, many initiatives have been undertaken that can unite people and revive the strong spiritual and moral foundations of public life.

The development of this co-operation, as well as witness to the precious unity of our Church, was aided by my trips throughout Russia, Ukraine and Moldova. These visits enriched my experience of prayer and communion with the faithful and, I hope, helped to strengthen our spiritual ties. In divine worship attended by a huge number of people the strength of faith and prayer which is the beauty of Orthodoxy, the beauty and power of 'the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace' (Eph 4:3), manifested itself in a special way.

In congratulating all of you on the Nativity of Christ and the New Year, I prayerfully wish that you abide unfaithfully in the joy of the Lord who was incarnate so that 'we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life' (Titus 3:7). 'May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit' (Rom 15:13). Amen.

/+ **KIRILL** /  
**PATRIARCH OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA**

The Nativity of Christ  
Moscow  
2011/2012