

NATIVITY EPISTLE
of the Archbishop of Chicago and Mid-America

Thy kingdom, O Christ God, is a kingdom of all the ages, and thy dominion is for all generations.

(Vespers Stichera of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ)

In our time of war, in our time of political strife, in our time of isolation, in our time of loneliness, in our time of immorality, we as Orthodox Christians are called upon to contemplate the humble Incarnation of the King of the Universe and to marvel at this great wonder. The Word of God, Who sits upon a fiery throne in the Heavens, from whence He rules all, lowers Himself to become a part of His own creation. God becomes man so that man might be raised up to his high calling as sons of God by Grace.

This process of transfiguration is, however, not a passive one: *“...from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.”* (Matthew 11:12) In other words, we must act, we must strive, we must work, we must struggle. The clergymen and the faithful laity together must work for the good of their parishes, the people of God, and the Holy Church.

Therefore, we must sanctify America by our labors and pious example, and we must prepare the next generation of Orthodox Christians to take our place in the Church as workers in the Kingdom and Dominion of the Lord. We must work together with the Lord to raise up our children into mature Orthodox adults. As we are present at the Divine Services for the great feast of our Lord's Nativity, we also mystically participate with the shepherds as they worship at the manger of the Divine God-Man, our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us entreat the Divine Child that He strengthen us to wisely and zealously educate our next generation in Orthodox Schools for their salvation! I call upon all our clergy and faithful to work together to establish an Orthodox School in every parish, or at least a Sunday School, where our children will be prepared for their high calling of service to the Lord in this life, and as saints in the next. May this be the gift we bring to the Lord on this day, as did the Wise Men from the East: that we would establish Orthodox Schools to raise faithful sons and daughter of His Church, which He provided to us for our salvation!

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

+ *Archbishop Peter*

Des Plaines, IL
Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ
December 25, 2023/January 7, 2024