



Prophet Elias News

News in a time of pandemic for the Orthodox Church of the
Holy Prophet Elias in Devon
CHRISTMAS EDITION 25th December 2021 – 8th January 2022



Nativity Epistle by Saint John, Archbishop of Shanghai and San Francisco

“Thou, Who art the God of peace and the Father of compassions, didst send unto us the Angel of Thy great Counsel, granting us peace.”

The Angel-Messenger of the pre-eternal Counsel of the Holy Trinity comes to the earth. This is not an ordinary messenger; it is the Only-begotten Son of God Himself. He brings peace to men. "Peace be unto you," He said more than once to His disciples. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you," He says to the apostles at the Mystical Supper, "not as the world giveth, give I unto you." And appearing after His Resurrection, again He says: "Peace be unto you." "For he is our peace," the holy Apostle Paul says concerning Him: "He came to the earth to reconcile man unto God by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby. And having come, He preached peace to those afar off and to those near, because through Him we both have access unto the Father."

The wall that separated heaven and earth is destroyed; the sword that barred the way to the tree of life disappears. Unto man that had sinned comes his Creator, calling him into His embrace! By the mouths of the apostles, the Holy Spirit cries out: "In Christ, be ye reconciled to God." You that had sinned came not to God, but the Son of God, before Whom you sinned, came to you! He calls everyone to Himself; He gives forgiveness to everyone who merely thirsts for this. For without the desire of man himself, without at least his little effort, God's peace cannot settle in him. The Lord forces no one to come to Him, but calls everyone: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Come all ye who are heavy laden with sins, who are exhausted from your labours and who do not find rest! You shall find that inner peace, which you will find nothing on earth more desirable than. The soul will feel unearthly peace and joy.

The Magi who worshipped the Babe experienced that joy; the shepherds, finding Him lying in a manger, also felt it. But neither peace nor joy touched the heart of Herod and those who wanted to destroy the Babe. For evil desire and malice are incompatible with inner peace. And whoever does not have inner peace, also sows strife and malice about.

The Church now calls us to meet Christ Who comes from heaven. What can we do in order to meet Him like the Magi, and not like Herod? "Ye that desire life, keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking guile. Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it." It tends to be hard to do this; we are weak when it comes to everything good. But the Son of God even came for this: in order to strengthen us. Not for naught was He born in Bethlehem, which signifies "house of bread." He feeds us with heavenly food, His flesh. "God, the Lord and Creator of all, as a babe in the flesh, is worshipped in a poor manger, crying out: eat My body and through faith be made steadfast." These words of the divine Babe are directed to us. Let us hearken to His call! Let us follow the Magi; let us hasten with the shepherds! Our churches are now that cave of Bethlehem. Not illusory, but in reality does He, Who is now being born in His most pure flesh, rest in them. Let us worship Him; let us offer as a gift our thoughts and desires; let us confess our sins, and let us taste of His immaculate Body and Blood. Whoever did not do this earlier, let him at least accomplish it now, when the star of Bethlehem is already shining! Our minds will be enlightened and the heart will hear:

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill among men!”

The Editors wish all our Readers a Joyful and Peaceful Christmas and a Happy New Year



Come, let us greatly rejoice in the Lord as we tell of this present mystery. The middle wall of partition has been destroyed; the flaming sword turns back, the cherubim withdraw from the tree of life, and I partake of the delight of Paradise from which I was cast out through disobedience. For the express image of the Father, the Imprint of His eternity, takes the form of a servant, and without undergoing change He comes forth from a Mother who knew not wedlock. For what He was, He has remained, true God: and what He was not, He has taken upon Himself, becoming man through love for mankind. Unto Him let us cry aloud: God, born of a virgin, have mercy upon us.

What shall we offer Thee, O Christ, who for our sakes hast appeared on earth as man? Every creature made by Thee offers Thee thanks. The angels offer Thee a hymn; the heavens a star; the Magi, gifts; the shepherds, their wonder; the earth, its cave; the wilderness, the manger; and we offer Thee a Virgin Mother. O pre-eternal God, have mercy upon us.

From Vespers for the Nativity

BC:AD

This was the moment when Before
Turned into After, and the future's
Uninvented timekeepers presented arms.

This was the moment when nothing
Happened. Only dull peace
Sprawled boringly over the earth.

This was the moment when even energetic Romans
Could find nothing better to do
Than counting heads in remote provinces.
And this was the moment

When a few farm workers and three
Members of an obscure Persian sect
Walked haphazard by starlight straight
Into the kingdom of heaven.

U A Fanthorpe

From Christmas Poems Enitharmon Press

Thou cam'st from heaven to earth, that we
Might go from earth to heaven with Thee.
And though Thou foundest no welcome here,
Thou didst provide us mansions there.
A stable was Thy court, and when
Men turned to beasts, beasts would be men.
They were Thy courtiers, others none;
And their poor manger was Thy throne.
No swaddling silks Thy limbs did fold,
Though Thou couldst turn Thy rays to gold.
No rockers waited on Thy birth,
No cradles stirred, nor songs of mirth;
But her chaste lap and sacred breast
Which lodged Thee first did give Thee rest.
But stay: what light is that doth stream,
And drop here in a gilded beam?
It is Thy star runs page, and brings
Thy tributary Eastern kings.
Lord! grant some light to us, that we
May with them find the way to Thee.
Behold what mists eclipse the day:
How dark it is! shed down one ray
To guide us out of this sad night,
And say once more, "Let there be light."

From *The Nativity* by Henry Vaughan 1621 – 1695

Make Us Worthy, O Lord

Jesus Christ, radiant centre of glory, image of our God, the invisible Father, revealer of His eternal designs, Prince of peace, father of the world to come; for our sake He took the likeness of a slave, becoming flesh in the womb of the Virgin Mary; for our sake, wrapped in swaddling bands and laid in a manger, adored by the shepherds and hymned by the angelic powers who sang: Glory to God in the heavens and on earth peace and good to men. Make us worthy, O Lord, to celebrate and conclude in peace the feast which magnifies the rising of Thy light, by avoiding empty words, working with justice, fleeing from the passions, and raising up the spirit above earthly goods. Bless Thy Church, formed long ago to be united with Thee through Thy life-giving blood. Come to the aid of Thy faithful shepherds, of the priests and teachers of the Gospel. Bless Thy faithful whose only hope is in Thy mercy, Christian souls, the sick, those who are tormented in spirit, and those who have asked us to pray for them. Have pity, in Thine infinite clemency, and preserve us in fitness to receive the endless good things to come. We celebrate Thy glorious Nativity, with the Father Who sent Thee for our redemption, and with the life-giving Spirit, now and forever and through all ages. Amen.

From an ancient Syriac Liturgy, cited on the website of Saint Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church, McKinney, Texas in [Gleanings from Orthodox Christian Authors & the Holy Fathers - nativity of christ](#)

This Fortnight We Celebrate

On Saturday December 25th:

THE NATIVITY ACCORDING TO THE FLESH OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST

The Adoration of the Magi, **Melchior, Caspar and Balthazar**

Commemoration of the **Shepherds in Bethlehem** who went to see the Lord.

We wish **Christos P** and **Father Ian** and all members of the Parish of the **Nativity of Christ in Lewes** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**

On Sunday 26th: Synaxis of the **Most Holy Mother of God**

Saint Joseph the Betrothed, David the King, and James the Brother of the Lord.

On Monday 27th: **Protomartyr and Archdeacon Stephen**

On Wednesday 29th: **The Holy Innocent Infants** slain by Herod at Bethlehem

On Friday 31st: **Saint Dositej the Confessor**, Metropolitan of Zagreb (1945)

On Saturday January 1st: **Saint Basil the Great**, Archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia (379)

We wish **Vassilis D** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**

On Sunday 2nd: **Saint Sylvester**, Pope of Rome (335)

Saint Seraphim of Sarov (1883)

We wish **Seraphim A H** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**

On Monday 3rd: **Saint Genevieve of Paris** (5thC)

On Tuesday 4th: **Saint Nikophoros the Leper** (1964)

On Thursday 6th: **THE HOLY THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST**

On Friday 7th: Synaxis of the **Holy Glorious Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John**

Noticeboard

25th December to 4th January is a Fast-free period

Services:

December 25th – Christmas Day Divine Liturgy Saint James' Hall 10am

We are hoping as many people as possible will be able to meet for Divine Liturgy at Saint James' Hall on Christmas morning. In the light of the current rapid rate of Omicron variant Covid infections, we encourage everyone to take a Lateral Flow test before coming, which will mean that even vulnerable people can be confident the gathering will be as safe as possible.

Sunday 26th: Matins and Divine Liturgy (in Romanian) St Stephen's 9am

Saturday January 1st: Vespers Saint Anne's 6pm

Sunday 2nd: Typika Saint Anne's 10.30am

Matins and Divine Liturgy (in Romanian) Saint Stephen's, Exeter High Street 9am

Wednesday 5th: Vespers for the Feast of Theophany Saint Anne's 6pm

Thursday 6th: **Theophany** Orthros and Divine Liturgy Torquay 9am

followed by Blessing of the Sea around 11.30

Saturday 8th: Divine Liturgy Saint Anne's 10.30am*

Celebration of the Feast of Theophany.

Fr Trayan will bring blessed water for distribution – please bring your own containers.

Saturday 15th: Vespers Saint Anne's 6pm

Sunday 16th: Typika Saint Anne's 10.30am

Matins and Divine Liturgy (in Romanian) Saint Stephen's, Exeter High Street 9am

Saturday 22nd: Divine Liturgy Saint Anne's 10.30am*

Saturday 29th: Vespers Saint Anne's 6pm

Sunday 30th: Typika Saint Anne's 10.30am

** Please note that these services will start promptly. We are hugely grateful to Father Trayan for coming to serve the Liturgy for us; he is on a very tight schedule on Saturdays and needs to get away in good time.*

For times of January services in Plymouth and Torbay go to: <https://plymchurch.com/services>



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF THYATEIRA AND GREAT BRITAIN

Christmas Message of His Eminence Archbishop Nikitas of Thyateira and Great Britain

As I sit and write a few words to you, beloved people of God, I speak to you as a father would speak to children at the waning of a frightening storm, but, at the same time, as a fellow human being, "fearfully and wonderfully made" in the image and likeness of our Creator. Together, we have crested many waves in this prolonged viral pandemic, and we hope that calm waters are within reach. While we mourn those who are no longer with us, and give thanksgiving for the resilience and courage displayed by humanity over the last two years, we now live in a changed world, more aware than ever of our fragility and vulnerability, of our interconnectedness and interdependency. We pray for peace, but also know that the fog of chaos looms on the horizon, whether it be the next microscopic plague that we will have to race to defend against, or the ongoing catastrophes brought about by humanity's desecration of the natural environment, or the despondency and violence generated by radical economic inequality and the commodification of human life.

Such problems and challenges seem unique to our point on the timeline of history, and yet we can look back to many such instances of great doubt and fear. The prayer for redemption and salvation is secretly hidden in the depths of every human being, and two thousand years ago the Chosen People of Israel were articulating this supplication with their hearts and minds turned to God. They "sat in darkness and in the shadow of death", waiting for the Messiah to be born, waiting for salvation. Israel called upon the Almighty to liberate them from the bondage of sin, and "when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law", to fulfill His words and His promise that He had not forsaken us. The Word of God took on flesh to redeem and save the cosmos. Christ was born, so the light of Truth might dispel the darkness that held not only Israel in captivity, but all of humanity.

I write these words to you, beloved of God, to witness to you and with you that the birth of Christ was the birth of hope in our world. The promises of the past are fulfilled and truth has vanquished deception. The Nativity set our world on a new course, as the Sun of Righteousness brought light and salvation to all those Who embraced Him and His message. Together, we endure the problems of daily life and the contours of history, but in the warm and gentle embrace of Christ, we understand in a mystical way that death has been vanquished. This gives us strength and determination to walk with faith and hope on the joyful path of salvation that has been prepared for us. It is Christ that sustained us throughout this pandemic and as He guides us to better days and this particular challenge becomes a memory of the past, we must look to Him as the only Lover of Mankind and our only salvation for whatever may lie ahead.

My brothers and sisters, I encourage all of you to attend our Church services and to pray from your hearts, but most of all to prepare for and receive the Holy Eucharist, the eternal celebration of thanksgiving and joy, the mystical experience of the Resurrection and the life-transfiguring assurance of God's love. Together let us join our voices in asking Christ, Who was born for our sake in a manger, for the healing and restoration of our world. When you light your candles, remember the cave and the star, and the Son of Man, born as an innocent Child and come to dwell amongst us. Remember that He brought hope to a world in shadow, and forget not that He was and is the fulfillment of all prophecy. Ask for God's healing grace and let His salvific message be inscribed in your hearts. Make this Christmas even more beautiful and distinct, with Christ's presence at the center of all your festivities.

May all the blessings, peace, joy and love that Christ freely gives to our world be with you and all your loved ones. With my paternal love and blessings, I wish you all a merry Christmas.

December 2021



The Archbishop
+ NIKITAS of Thyateira and Great Britain