



HOMILY FOR THE FEAST OF CHRIST'S NATIVITY

I greet you, beloved brethren, with God's indescribable gift of love and mercy to us sinners – with the coming to earth of the Son of God, Who descended from heaven by the all-benevolent will of God the Father for the sake of our salvation, and Who became incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and took on the form of man. Christ was born – glorify Him; Christ came from heaven – meet ye Him; Christ is on earth – be ye exalted. Thus, Christ is on earth, while you should ascend to heaven with your thoughts and hearts, because Christ came for us, in order to lift us up from earth into heaven, into the eternal paradisiacal dwellings, as our holy Mother – the Church – tells us. O people, sing with joy the Nativity of Christ the Saviour! But in order for our joy to be loftier, clearer, and stronger, let us ponder, brethren, the majesty of the One born of the Virgin, and let us add to this our thoughts on how to welcome Him in a worthy manner.

Thus who is this Infant, Whom the holy Virgin Mary is holding in Her arms? It is God, the Supreme Being, Who created everything out of nothing, Who maintains all creation with His power, and builds the whole world by His providence. It is the supreme Artist, Who, having created all visible matter out of the four elements, made up an annual cycle of four seasons: spring, summer, fall, and winter. It is the Creator and God of spirits and all flesh; all the angelic hosts tremble before Him; the sun hymns Him; the moon glorifies Him; the stars attend Him; light obeys Him; all abysses of the sea, air, and the netherworld tremble before Him; all springs of water serve Him. He has stretched out the sky; He has founded the earth; He has restrained the sea with sand; He has decorated the earth with flowers; He grows all grains and fruits of the earth; He has diffused air for all creatures to breathe; He forms infants in their mothers' wombs; He is the nourisher of all creatures! The angelic hosts serve Him; hosts of archangels worship Him; the many-eyed Cherubim and the six-winged Seraphim, who stand and fly around His throne, cover their faces in fear of His unapproachable glory... It is this indescribable, pre-eternal and inexpressible God Who has now come down to earth for us, taking on the form of a servant. O wondrous miracle! God has taken on the nature of enslaved man and has become entirely like unto us in all but sin.

What is the reason for such compassion, such absolute self-abasement? It is for the sake of our salvation (replies the Church). We were languishing under the dark power of the devil; we were sitting in the shade of death; we were being kept in the fetters of hell... And then the all-merciful Master, Who had originally created us after His image and His likeness, unable to watch the devil torture mankind by separating it from God, by obscuring its mind and heart, by making it attached to all worldly things, to various sins, iniquities, and idol-worship, – came to deliver us from servitude to the enemy.

O, God's immeasurable benevolence! O, God's indescribable wisdom! O, wondrous miracle, awesome not only to the human mind, but also to the angelic one! Let us give glory to God! With the coming down to earth of the Son of God in the flesh, with His offering Himself as a sacrifice for sinful mankind, instead of the damnation that had been announced by God in the beginning, the faithful are now granted the Heavenly Father's blessing; they are made sons of God and inheritors of eternal life; through the sacrament of renewal, i.e. through baptism and repentance, the Heavenly Father is once again being returned to the mankind that had been orphaned by sin. Mankind is being delivered from

the most tormenting and lethal power of the devil, from the anguish of sin and passion; man's nature is being deified by the Son of God's immeasurable charity, and man's sins are being forgiven seventy times sevenfold; sinners are granted absolution, the impure are purified, the defiled are sanctified, the frail are healed, the dishonored are granted supreme honor and glory; the obscure in mind are enlightened by the divine light of grace and reason; human reason is deified by divine reason; the human heart is granted Christ's heart; all that is corrupt and wounded by sin and passion is decorated with divine glory; all that hungers and thirsts becomes sated with the word of God and the Most-holy Body and Divine Blood of Christ; the sorrowing are comforted; those violated by the devil are delivered.

What is required of us, brethren, in order that we may make use of all this grace that has been brought to us from heaven by the Son of God? First of all, we must have faith in the Son of God and in the salvific teaching of the Gospel; we must genuinely repent of our sins and rectify our lives and hearts; we must communicate with God through prayer and the sacraments; we must know and fulfill Christ's commandments. We are in need of virtues: Christian humility, charity, abstention, purity and chastity, truthfulness, simplicity, and goodness of heart.

Let us offer these virtues, brethren, as gifts to the One Who was born for our salvation, in place of the gold, frankincense, and myrrh that were brought to Him – as King, God, and Man, – by the magi. This will be our most favorable offering to God and the Infant Jesus Christ. Amen.

St. John of Kronstadt

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