

Message of His Eminence
Metropolitan Stephanos of Tallinn and All Estonia
On the Nativity of Our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ
A.D. 2020

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Joy is today in heaven and peace on earth, since God loves mankind. That is what our hymns proclaim today, on the day of Nativity of Our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ. The Son of God has married our humanity because he loves us madly. He receives this humanity as it is, degenerated and disfigured. He gives himself to mankind forever.

Today, the angel of the Lord says to the shepherds: "For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11). This is how God decided to fulfil an ancient prophesy uttered by Isaiah (7:14). The prophesy says that a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call his name Immanuel, which means "God with us". By this the birth of Jesus was foretold. He bears the two names: Jesus which means "the Saviour" and Immanuel, "God with us". In both, the joy of Christmas is manifest.

But how can we live in this truth, in the great joy proclaimed and granted us, when so few around us can hear and receive and perceive it? How to live in the truth of the birth of Christ, when so many Christians and their children must celebrate this day of the Nativity of our God in the middle of disease, war, hunger, and human folly. How to live in the truth of this great joy that Jesus is truly among us, even when he is elsewhere than we think him to be. But despite all he will today find a place among us.

To live in truth, this is the joy of Christmas. These questions show us the modern reality: the world is being secularised and rejects everything that is sacred, God included, instead of trying to listen what he has to say. All this results not only in the slackening of morality, but also the denial and extirpation of our spiritual roots.

What are we to do, then? Are we ready to accept Jesus as our best gift, who has come not only to save and comfort, but also to remind us that the presence and salvation of God incite us to be active and creative? To give, in return, our share and do what God expects us to do and to become like God wants us to become? What Nativity of Christ reveals is that God expects infinitely more that we ourselves expect of ourselves. "Do as I do" he tells us, "if need be, give me your misery, your poverty and your desperation. Come, fear not! Leave behind your sadness and shame". The Lord expects no gifts from us. He expects ourselves. He expects us personally. He loves us. Let us hasten to meet him. Let us leave behind all indifference, all sadness and hesitation. The joy of the Lord is our joy, our tears are his tears. It is his joy and the joy of his Father is that we live.

Let us listen carefully what St. Johan the Evangelist tells us in his prologue: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). The Word of God, Christ, abandoned the province of all kinds of sceptics in order to come and dwell with us like one most common of us, to be acceptable to all, to be in our hearts, our homes, our towns and our streets. God does not belong only to intellectuals, to philosophers, to all sorts of scholars who often speak much without saying anything, who cannot or will not understand the reality of the deep mystery of the birth of God made man. The God they reject came through Jesus Christ to our own future, to our own existence, to our own present.

My dear ones,

The salvation which is offered to us does not come from without. It is in the Saviour just born.

Salvation is in this little Child in Bethlehem, who is much poorer than we. Let me take as an example the first beatitude (Matthew 5:10): “poverty in spirit” is an all-embracing poverty that concerns all human being, his body, his heart and soul, exemplified by the poor shepherds of Bethlehem. And I would like to add that the wisdom of the Wise Men of East was essentially interior, concerned the secret and spiritual seed inside, not the good and the needs of this world.

So, the moment the shepherds and the Wise Men saw the star, the moment they perceived the content of this message and followed in faith, they understood that a great pivot of the spiritual history was there. Let it be this way with us, too.

May my fatherly blessings be with you, your families and all your dear ones.

Merry Christmas! Happy New Year 2021!

+ Stephanos,

Metropolitan of Tallinn and All Estonia

Christmas 2020.