

MESSAGE FOR THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

'Glory to God in the highest', I hear today the bodiless powers sing in Bethlehem.

Glory to Him who sent His peace on earth according to His goodwill.

Today the divine Saviour is born. A glorious day, a day of joy! (Sticheron of the litany).

Brothers and Sisters

God enters our time and history. His main message is peace, 'Peace on earth' as the angels sing.

Peace is our highest good. It gives meaning to the whole world, it is the foundation of the good fortune of nations, it exalts our feelings, it promotes life, it assures the continuity of civilizations. The celebration of the Nativity of Christ should bring about a healing comprehension at a time when the world is increasingly falling into disorder, because of both the violence and poverty arising from the wars that ravage so many countries. The angels' song in praise of God who wishes that men had peace on earth belongs as if to a different time.

How would we enjoy the divine joy

among the societies as yet filled with racism and enmity;

among the frantic race of our century governed by thirst for pleasure and unending consumerism;

among the self-evident tragic dimension of life and death, unfulfilled because of the misery of godless man;

forgetting human trouble and distress?

Can we identify ourselves with the suffering of mankind in whatever form, when God Himself has identified Himself with everyone in their utmost distress and misery, material of spiritual?

How it is that by His birth the Son of God assumes our degenerated, twisted humanity which is unable to love, and unites Himself to it fully and forever?

Today it is Christmas! One may laugh at it, but there is no irony or utopia in this feast. Christmas is the paradox of the suffering of the joy of the Father and the suffering of His children, the paradox that Christ assumes by His birth and which He invites us to experience together with Him.

Today it is Christmas! Jesus bears the burden of human misery, evil and death; these will be His and through Him they open up to life instead of closing up for death.

Indeed, Christmas is an assertion of both the depression of the world and the fact that history is nothing else than a continuous bloodshed of the innocent. God Himself "seeks asylum" in this world to be with the suffering ones. This great feast of Our Lord is the revelation of a great mystery, mankind's restored unity in Christ, who came among us to suffer persecution for justice and peace and who changed the rage of passions to limitless compassion.

Before the face of God, the only Lord of the world, we are all poor, like the ones Christ identifies Himself with. Let us never forget this.

I WISH YOU A GOOD AND PEACEFUL CHRISTMASTIDE
AND A HOLY AND BLESSED NEW YEAR!

Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord A.D. 2014

+ Stephanos,
Metropolitan of Tallinn and All Estonia