



**THE MONASTERY OF SAINT TIKHON OF ZADONSK**

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**Nativity 2018**

Beloved of the Lord,

“In that you did it to the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me” (Matthew 25:40)

The heart of man was made in such a way as to be able to receive God. This means not only that we are to become the Temple of God (1 Cor. 3:16) but also that our nature was formed to be capable of giving a home in the flesh to the eternal Word of God — Jesus Christ, in whom all the fullness of the Godhead dwelt bodily (Col. 2:9).

Our task is to pray and live in such a way that when we look at our neighbor, we begin to see heaven and not hell. This happens only when we say “yes” to God and to His Cross in our life, and when we say “no” to our fallen nature which wars against the things of God. This opportunity to follow Christ is an honor given to each of us, and we must take up our cross daily, not once only but repeatedly, day after day, again and again, commending ourselves, each other, and all our life to Christ our God.

Resolute faith in the God-Man, our Lord Jesus Christ, and in His Death and Resurrection, is not a commitment welcomed in today’s society. Indeed, our culture is not so much forgetful of God, but rather openly hostile towards Him, rejecting Christianity and the Gospel commandments. But this hostility that we experience both from the fallen world and (above all) from the fallen spirits around us provides an important confirmation of the truth of our Faith. For if God and His Kingdom and His righteousness did not exist, why would anyone fight so strenuously against them? Thus we must take courage and constantly remind ourselves: the greater the fight, the greater the trophy!

This Nativity, let us again make ready our hearts as a dwelling-place for God, remembering that all created nature was made to receive its Creator, who, in His own Person, brought all division, injustice, and sin to naught. When we see our neighbor, let us always remember that he too is created to be the dwelling-place of the Most High God. Let us extend our hand in help with kindness to others, remembering that “in that you did it to the very least My brethren, you did it to Me.” In our neighbor, let us see and honor the God who made heaven and earth, for man was formed from the clay of the earth but has been exalted to the heavenly throne of God.

With much love in the newborn Christ,

Archimandrite Sergius  
Abbot of St. Tikhon’s Monastery