



## THE MONASTERY OF SAINT TIKHON OF ZADONSK

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*Make ready, O Bethlehem! Open unto all, O Eden! Adorn thyself, O Ephratha!  
For the Tree of life hath blossomed forth from the Virgin in the cave.  
Her womb is shown to be a spiritual paradise,  
wherein lieth a divine garden; eating from whence we live, not dying like Adam.  
Christ is born to raise up His image which before was fallen.*

Beloved of the Lord,

We greet you all with the coming feast of the Nativity of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. Each Nativity Season, we are reminded why God created man in the beginning: Man was created with the purpose and ability to see God and through this vision to share in God's own life and become eternal. The first-created man in Paradise saw God and this vision was his life. However, when man fell away from God, through his own will thereby introducing death into the world, God Himself came to resume the dialog that He originally had with man before it was broken by the fall. Not in a whirlwind, nor a threatening thunder, nor a flaming fire does the Lord our God come to man, thereby frightening him. No, God comes to us again this Nativity in the most accessible, most vulnerable and easily received way: as a Child.

As we begin to prepare to receive the God-man Jesus Christ this Nativity, the question we must ask ourselves is this: will we prepare ourselves in such a way, through fasting, confession, repentance, prayer, communion and almsgiving so as to be able receive this truth and thus be able to see Him? Or will we, like the rest of the world, fail to ready the eye of our heart and only see a quaint scene of a baby with his mother, being of no special significance to us, and pass it by as if it were of no consequence.

God is with us! He comes as a child to restore the image that is fallen, the image of God in us that needs healing, cleansing and salvation. Hence, we too according to the Lord's word, must become as children if we are to enter the Kingdom and God Himself even shows us the example and the way. In the midst of the busyness of our world, let us not fail to recognize the incredible, inexpressible Gift that is once again placed before us. God comes to re-inaugurate the vision of Himself which is salvation: to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ. Let us receive this gift and in turn let us offer our life in return as our reasonable worship. Let us not turn away the Theotokos and St. Joseph from the Inn of our heart, crowded by the cares of life, but let us make ready to receive the One Who comes and will come again, seeing Him as He is: God-incarnate, the Word made flesh, the Prince of Life, the King of Peace and the Savior of our souls. Wishing you all a blessed Nativity Season,

In the new born Christ,

Igumen Sergius  
Abbot of St. Tikhon's Monastery