



November 13, 2021
St. John Chrysostom

Beloved of the Lord,

Greetings and blessings to you as we begin this week to fast and prepare for the feast of the Nativity!

Our Savior came to us in the flesh when our need was greatest. "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light" (Is. 9:1). For "it was neither an ambassador nor an angel," but the Lord Himself came to us and saved us (Is. 63:9 lxx). Life's difficulties often remind us that "without Him we can do nothing" (Jn. 15:5), and this is the right starting point for true spiritual life. God does the greater part but we must do *what we can* in order to make His power active in our lives. St. Isaac the Syrian reminds us that we are not the Church of the saved but the Church of the perishing—and thus through our weakness we come to know Christ's strength.

Christ Himself is our Peace, the peace that passeth all understanding (Phil. 4:7), but we must invite this peace into hearts. It is only through prayer when our hearts are made to be still do we come to "know that He is God" (Ps. 45/46:10). Without Christ, we can do nothing. Without the God-Man, says St. Justin Popovich, there is not even man, but only sub-humanity. Without the Son of Man, we children of earth are divested of our immortal, god-like selves, that spiritual and good part of human nature which shall not be taken away from us even at death (Lk. 10:42). He Himself came to us, to save us and to impart to us His eternal Spirit. This great gift of abundant life is bestowed upon us through the Incarnation, but we must show this Gift a worthy welcome! We must strive to make a place in our lives, our time, and our treasures to build up this gift within us. We must make the life of the Gospel commandments the way that we actually live—certainly, a great challenge for us all, but "if you love me," the Lord says, "keep my commandments" (Jn. 14:15). There is no greater commandment than that we love one another, and especially that we love those who do not love us: love for enemies most resembles the love of Christ who "came unto His own, and His own received Him not," but whom He nevertheless "loved unto the end" (Jn. 1:11, 13:1).

God Himself came, and "as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the children of God" (Jn. 1:12). God has come to us and saved us. Let us receive Him with joy, thanksgiving, and fear, for this receiving is the part we must play, enabling us to make this gift our own and keep it forever. May the Lord continue to strengthen and bless us all as we make our way to Bethlehem's cave, where the fabric of the material world was changed and we were given eternal life.

With much love in the newborn Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fr. Sergius". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial letter.

Fr. Archmandrite Sergius
Abbot of St. Tikhon's Monastery



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