

ENCYCLICAL
for the Feast of the Nativity of our Savior Christ

The Sustenance and Delight of the Church

The Work of God and the Ministry of the *Theotokos*

My Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

The Work¹ given by God the Father to His Son commences this day, with the synergy of the Holy Spirit and the ministry of the *Theotokos*.

Today, the Son of God becomes Man, that we might be delivered from the “power of darkness” and “translated into [His] Kingdom”;² conveying us “from death unto life”;³ and granting us “redemption through His blood.”⁴

As Great Prophet, as Great High Priest, and as Great King, Christ has “finished” the single, unique, and indivisible “work which God the Father gave Him to do”:⁵ as **Prophet**, He has illumined us with the “words” that the Father “gave” Him to “give”⁶ to us; as **High Priest**, He has offered the Great Sacrifice upon the Cross, in our stead and on our behalf, while as Eternal High Priest, He continues to intercede with the Father “for us”;⁷ and finally, as **King**, He has made sin, the Devil, and death subject to the Grace-endowed and sanctified will of man.⁸

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My Christ-loving Brothers and Sisters:

Today, we celebrate the “Dawn of the Mystic Day,”⁹ that is, of the eternal Kingdom of God, through the Most Blessed *Theotokos*.

Our Lord begins His Work for the renewal of the world, resting in the arms of His Mother. This image highlights not only what God has given us—namely, His Only-Begotten Son—but also what we, as grateful men, have offered to Our Lord for the accomplishment of His Work.

Very aptly has it been written that to the words, “God so loved the world, that He gave His Only-Begotten Son,”¹⁰ the Church gives a corresponding response: “The world so loved God that it gave Him her whose beauty and purity disclose the deepest meaning and value of the world.”¹¹

This image of Mother and Child provides us an authentic image of the True

World, of the True Life, of the True Man. It proclaims to us the glad tidings of a unique historical event: the Eternal Love of God for the world and the Eternal Love of the world for God unite and culminate in a preternatural embrace.

Thus, in the person of the Virgin, there is revealed to us the Divine depth, beauty, wisdom, and light of the world, as these are lovingly reunited with their Creator.¹²

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My Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

The Saints tell us that “just as” God “planted the Tree of Life in the earthly Paradise, so also He planted in the Paradise of the Church another Tree of Life, incomparably more honorable, which is the Mystery of the Divine Eucharist.”¹³

The Bride of God, Our Lady, bore within her the “Bread of Life,”¹⁴ the New Tree of Life, Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Sustenance and Delight of the pious.

For this reason, our Church daily salutes the *Theotokos* and Mother of the Light: “Rejoice, Minister of Holy Delight.”¹⁵ Rejoice, Minister of Holy Delight, Minister of the Sacred Banquet of the Eucharist, Minister of our divinizing Communion with God the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit.

The Work of Our Savior is continued through the Church, which shepherds us in a Prophetic, Priestly, and Kingly manner. Our Immaculate Lady continues to minister to this Work, bearing the Church, the world, and creation in her maternal embrace, in anticipation of the union of all in the uncreated Love of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen!

+ The Holy Nativity of Our Savior Jesus Christ, 2009

Your humble intercessor before our Incarnate Lord,

† **Bishop Cyprian of Oreoi,**
*Acting President of the
Holy Synod in Resistance*

Notes

1. St. John 17:4.
2. Colossians 1:13.
3. I St. John 3:14.

4. Ephesians 1:7.
5. Cf. St. John 17:4.
6. Cf. St. John 17:8.
7. “Who is even at the right hand of God, Who also maketh intercession for us” (Romans 8:34); cf. Hebrews 7:25, 9:24.
8. Cf. St. Mark 16:17-18.
9. “Salutations” to the *Theotokos*, *Oikos X*.
10. St. John 3:16.
11. Cf. Father Alexander Schmemmann, *Ἡ Παναγία* [The All-Holy Virgin] (Athens: “Akritas,” 2003), p. 45.
12. Cf. Schmemmann, *op. cit.*
13. St. Nicodemos the Hagiorite, *Γυμνάσματα Πνευματικά* [Spiritual Exercises] (Thessalonica: 1971), p. 457b.
14. St. John 6:35.
15. “Salutations” to the *Theotokos*, *Oikos XII*.

Note: The Reverend Parish Priests are asked to read the present Encyclical immediately after the Holy Gospel for the Divine Liturgy of Christmas.