My Beloved Ones,

I greet you with love and joy in the name of our Incarnate Lord, God and Savior, Jesus Christ!

We are blessed once more to witness the dawning of the sun of righteousness in our lives as we celebrate the Nativity of our Savior. In Greek, this feast is known as Χριστουγέννα, which of course means, “The Birth of Christ”. However, our world has not simply celebrated a historical event for the past two-thousand years; no, we are also celebrating the birth of a new era: a life which allows us to live in reconciliation with our God.

The Church Fathers remind us that Christ is the Second Adam, who brought spirituality and salvation, where the first Adam brought us out of Paradise through His disobedience to our Creator. Faithful Christians throughout the world celebrate our Lord’s Incarnation as a sign of God’s love: He offered His only begotten Son, who (as St. Paul reminds us) gave us His own life for our salvation and reunion with God. Indeed, the whole universe celebrates this great day, as the Vesperal Sticheria proclaims, “Every creature made by Thee offers Thee thanks. The angels offer Thee a hymn; the heavens a star; the Magi, gifts; the shepherds their wonder; the earth, its cave, the wilderness, the manger.”

Living in the spirit of this happy, joyful day, we are called not to simply observe Christmas for a single day on the 25th of December, but throughout the 12 Days of Christmas, the Dodekaimeron, which continues with the Feast of St. Stephen (December 27th), the Holy Innocents martyred in Bethlehem (December 29th) and the Naming and Circumcision of our Lord (January 1st).

All of these lead us to the Theophany (January 6th): when we shall see the Holy Trinity manifest itself at one time, and in one place, with the Holy Spirit taking the form of a dove, and the voice of God speaking over Christ’s Baptism, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17). In these 12 days when the universe itself becomes different, our Church seeks to remind us of this great gift we have received.

Therefore, I ask you all to use this Holy Season as an opportunity to reflect on another verse from the Vespers of Christmas Eve: “What shall we offer Thee, O Christ, who for our sakes hast appeared on earth as man?” Truly, what present can we have to offer the Prince of Peace but our own sins? “The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.” (Psalm 51:17) This is the reason He humbled Himself: to create the spiritual Hospital, where we may receive the strength and the inspiration to achieve theosis.
In the hymnology of the Church we hear, “Χριστὸς γεννᾶται, δοξάσατε! Christ is Born, Glorify Him!” However, it is not enough to simply say that we believe that our Lord took on our flesh—we must live out our love for Him by implementing His Gospel, by imitating His mercy and kindness in our own lives. In this way, our neighbor will see our good works and glorify God, and we receive a gift more precious than any which can be bought: Peace. The peace our Lord Jesus Christ gives to us is in no way like the peace offered by the world, but is instead the kind of happiness promised to us by the Angels: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men!” (Luke 2:14)

May it be so now, and all the days of our lives.

Καλὰ Χριστουγεννα και Καλὴ Χρονια!
Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

+ ALEXIOS
Metropolitan of Atlanta