

Encyclical of the Archbishop on the occasion of our entry into the Christmas Advent.

Dear beloved in the Lord,

It is a great pleasure to write to you to remind you that starting on the 15th of November this month, feast day of Sacred Confessors and Martyrs Gouria, Samon and Abbibos we will be entering the Christmas season. The Mother Church with its hymns, Services and fasting, leads us into the Mystery of Christmas. This holy and joyful period begins with the chanting of Christ's descent, "Christ is born! Glorify Him! Christ descends from the heavens, welcome Him! Christ is now on earth, O be jubilant! Sing to the Lord, the whole earth, and sing praises to Him with joy, O ye people, for He has been exalted." This pan-Christian celebration is expressed with actions, prayers, both private and public which takes place in Church, every Sunday and feastday, and in the Monasteries or Sketes where the Monks and the Nuns dedicate their lives to the praise of the Triune Worshipped God. With the Event of the Incarnation of the Godman Christ, the Prophecies of the Israelite Saints of the Ancient World, in Greece and the Middle East, are fulfilled. We are privileged because we live in the times of 'Christ's birth', the eternal will of sacred philanthropy and love have been actualised in the Person of "the Only Son and the Word of God born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem of Judea". Therefore, following the sacred hymnographer of the Church, we remind ourselves and each other of our faith in our Saviour and Redeemer of Humankind Christ and our praise to him. Doxology is not limited to words only, but also becomes an action, a personal encounter with and a live faith in Christ as a Saviour and Redeemer of Humankind.

These forty days before Christmas are days of anticipation and preparation in order to celebrate in a sacred manner with peace, love, purity of soul and body, and free from the many and unbearable "burdens" that each of us carries on our souls and bodies. Our goal, dear brothers and sisters in the Lord, is to strive until Christ is formed in us and we are confident that "Christ is everything and is in everything"; that he will guide our lives and actions so that we will always be instruments of Divine Grace and living members of His mystical body of His Church. His simplicity of life, his modest clothing and way of living, his humble countenance and his sacred association with and thought for others, the poor and humble in heart, his unceasing prayer for those whom nature and our greed have ignored, perhaps help us in our true and genuine preparation for the reception of the Unique Visitor of the Human Race, our Lord Jesus Christ, whom Christians are waiting for to celebrate at this Period. So let us pray, "modestly and humbly" that Christ may come bringing the coveted faith, unwavering faith, peace, love and brotherhood and the blessing that we all need, as characteristically written by St Paul, "So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built upon him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness" (Colossians. 2.6-7).

Wishing that you to spend these sacred days of preparation in health, peace and joy, and in anticipation of the majestic holiday of Christmas, with many blessings, love and honour in the Lord.

London, November 2017

Archbishop of Thyateira

and Great Britain Gregory

Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain

Encyclical for the Fast of the Nativity

Note: To be read from the Pulpit instead of a Sermon on Sunday 12 or 19 November 2017