

**Christmas Message**  
**by Patriarch KIRILL of Moscow and All Russia**  
**to the archpastors, pastors, deacons, monastics and**  
**all the faithful children of the Russian Orthodox Church**

**Beloved in the Lord archpastors, all-honourable presbyters and deacons,**  
**God-loving monks and nuns, dear brothers and sisters,**

I extend my cordial greetings to all of you on the great Feast of the Nativity of Christ.

On this radiant night the whole creation rejoices, for the Lord *now draws nigh and comes, expectation of the nations and salvation of the world* (Forefeast of the Nativity, Compline Canon). Living in hope for many years of the Saviour's coming were people who after their expulsion from paradise had lost connection with their Creator and forgotten how joyful it was to sense the presence of God every single day, hear His voice close by, be able to address Him and immediately receive an answer, and know that they were perfectly safe – because the Lord was near them.

This feeling of safety, protection and peace is what we lack for today, when the pernicious pestilence still exerts its effect on our life, when it is difficult to make prognoses and plans, when the uncertainty of the morrow keeps people on their toes and causes alarm. However, in these adverse circumstances we have experienced with particular acuteness the fragility of human life. We have realised that we should appreciate every new day as the greatest gift from God, that enforced solitude may become a heavy burden and that it is of utmost importance to be able to regularly communicate in person with our relatives and friends.

Beholding now the Infant Christ lying in a manger, His Most Pure Mother and the Righteous Joseph the Betrothed, we become aware that only love for God and people can strengthen us in various ordeals, drive fear out of our hearts and give us strength to perform good works.

For at one of the most important moments in her life, the Most Holy Theotokos also found herself in trying circumstances – in a strange town, at a deserted place, in a cave used for keeping cattle. However, the poor cave *became a beautiful palace for Her* (Forefeast of the Nativity, Troparion), because her heart was overfilled with love for her Son and God: this love transfigured everything around Her, and the Most Pure Virgin noticed neither inconveniences nor the *abject poverty* of the cave. Gratitude to the Maker and tenderness for the new-born Infant allowed her to disregard any difficulties and see the good Divine Providence in every circumstance sent down by the Lord. It stands in stark contrast to our attitude towards God-given trials, to how, for instance, during the lockdown many people even thought of their own home as prison, lost heart and was pessimistic about everything.

As today in our minds we are standing before the manger of the Saviour, at which alongside the Creator there is the whole creation – people, animals and angels, *servants of the all-holy and three-Sunned Radiance* (Monday Matins, Canon, Tone 5) – let us feel that we abide in God’s love and are united around Christ. Let us free our souls from the shackles of fear, distrust, alarm and desperation, and hear the voice of the Son of God Who comes down to the sinful earth and calls unto Him all *that labour and are heavy laden*, promising to give them *rest* (Mt. 11:28). He comes – and teaches us how to live so that the lost heavenly bliss could again become a reality, and, what is even more important, so that we, people, could be united with the Lord in an unfathomable and mysterious way.

*The Heavenly King Who was born on earth* (Sticheras of the Nativity) has already done everything for our salvation. All that remains for us to do is to accept His love and respond to it by our deeds – by living according to the commandments, by acts of mercy, by firm faith and wish to be with God, and by willingness to not only receive abundant mercies from His Fatherly hands, but also, having great hope and trust in Him, surmount various difficulties.

My dears, time and again I extend to you my Nativity greetings. *No one is shut out from this joy*, St. Leo the Great writes, *all share the same reason for rejoicing... Let the saint rejoice as he sees the palm of victory at hand. Let the sinner be glad as he receives the offer of forgiveness* (Sermon 1 on the Nativity of Christ). May the Lord grant unto all of you spiritual and bodily health, inexhaustible joy and fortitude, and strength as you continue to work and follow the path of salvation. Amen.

**+KIRILL  
PATRIARCH OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA**

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