

**BISHOP OF THE METROPOLITANATE
OF AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND
THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
S Y D N E Y**



**ЕПИСКОП МИТРОПОЛИЈЕ
АУСТРАЛИЈСКО - НОВОЗЕЛАНДСКЕ
СРПСКЕ ПРАВОСЛАВНЕ ЦРКВЕ
С И Д Н Е Ј**

**To all our beloved clergy, monastics and faithful of our God-saving Serbian Orthodox
Metropolitanate of Australia and New Zealand**

My dear children in the Godchild Christ,

CHRIST IS BORN – INDEED HE IS BORN!

Gathered on the eve of the great feast of the Holy Nativity, we bow down before the Godchild Christ emulating the Wisemen of old, and join the angels in exclaiming, “Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!” (Luke 2, 14).

We prostrate down before the Godchild Christ, giving thanks to God for His boundless mercy, for receiving the gift of theanthropic vision in this world.

The appearance of God incarnate in this world is the central and most colossal, the most significant event and tipping point in the history of mankind and the world. God settles Himself among us in the most immediate way possible. He pitches His tent among us, revealing Himself as Emmanuel - God with us (Matthew 1:23), as the divinely inspired Scriptures foretold.

In this New Testament advent, God reveals Himself to humanity in a unique and unfathomable way. He takes upon Himself our flesh, is born as a Child, that is, He becomes one of us, akin to us in every way except for sin. He speaks to us using His own human tongue, without the need of a mediator.

As much as the fallen human mind rebels against the Nativity of Christ, i.e., the bodily incarnation of God, the Incarnation of God paradoxically remains humanity’s most intrinsic and deep-seated desire and necessity. Humanity yearns to ‘see’ God in this world; to be able to touch Him and hear Him, to experience God’s embrace and understanding of our miserable state.

Desiring to accentuate the magnitude of God’s bodily advent, St Justin Popovic asserts that only a God that knows what it means to be human can judge humanity! Even though these words may seem audacious, they reflect and vocalise the profound yearning of a wounded humanity, which through the epochs has directed its gaze towards the Heavens in anticipation of the same.

It is for this reason the aforementioned saint speaks of the Godman Christ as being the fundamental Truth of Orthodoxy, because it is in Christ, and through Christ, that all questions that trouble the human spirit find their clarification and answer.

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The experience of the Church testifies to this, where many through the power of Christ have found comfort and healing, transfiguration and deification.

Faced with many challenges, that one cannot but notice multiplying year after year, due to lawlessness abounding (Matthew 24:12), we need to ask ourselves what this world would look like if it was not illumined by the light of Bethlehem? How could one live in a world without the light of Bethlehem? Without the light of Tabor? Without the light of the Resurrection? In a world which, with the passing of each day, is becoming less and less the intended paradise of God, and more its antipode, Hades.

Confronted with societal and other crises across the globe, with everyday challenges, including the overwhelming bushfire crisis that has hit us at home, we are required, especially as the Church, to be in a state of unceasing prayer, always looking towards the heavens, to the Godchild Christ.

The Holy Fathers teach us that when man wonders, when he is disorderly, he leads creation into disorder, and as St Nicholaj Velimirovic teaches, nature then turns against him in an act of merciless retribution, not recognising in man its master Adam.

We are therefore, called to labour until Christ is born in us, until the image of the New Adam is formed in us. For nature, which God has entrusted to humankind, having recognised a fresh the image of its master in us, will stop its rebellion against us.

We remember this Christmas eve all those who have suffered in the bushfires. May the Godchild Christ grant them His healing and comfort.

We likewise remember and pray this Christmas eve for all our brothers and sisters who are suffering hardships in Kosovo and Metohija. May the Godchild Christ grant them solace and much needed strength to endure their tribulations and preserve them in this most sacred Serbian land.

Shaken by the unfolding events in the Holy Nemanjic land of Montenegro, observing the systematic aggression directed towards the Serbian Orthodox Church, we call upon our clergy, our monastics and faithful to pray fervently for our Church, our brothers and sisters in Montenegro, that they may persevere in the defence of the Holy Sanctuaries of our centuries old monasteries and churches.

Today we are witnesses to a systematic and organised assault being orchestrated against Christ's Church at all levels with the desire to weaken it, to silence its prophet voice in society.

For this reason, my dear brothers and sisters, as your archpastor, I call you to be alert, on guard, to be mindful of false prophets (Matthew 7, 15) who have the appearance of godliness but have renounced its power (2 Timothy 3,5).

The Holy Orthodox Church is One, Universal and Apostolic, and in Her canonical fold is the one and undivided Church of St Sava.

Let us be in love and peace with one another. Let us embrace each other with the forgiving and loving spirit of the Holy Nativity. Let us take the path of our Holy Ancestors.

We need to make an effort in transforming our homes (as domestic churches), and even more, so our Church communities, into spiritual oases; places of transfiguration, of spiritual growth and strengthening. It is exceedingly important that we give our children the proper example, to edify and lead them according to the Path of Christ's Gospel.

I greet you all this evening, beloved children of the Church of Saint Sava in Australia and New Zealand, especially our children and youth. May the Godchild Christ grant us all this Holy Nativity the illumination of heart, granting us His gift of sacrificial love and all that is necessary unto our salvation.

Christ is Born – Indeed He is Born!



+ **SILUAN**

*Bishop of Australia and New Zealand
The Serbian Orthodox Church*