

ENOCHICAL



Of His Eminence Metropolitan Nektarios of Hong Kong and Southeast Asia For the Great Feast of Christmas 2008

To the Reverend Priests and Deacons, the Monks and Nuns, the Members of the Parishes of the Orthodox Metropolitanate of Hong Kong and South East Asia and the Entire Orthodox Family in South East Asia

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Christmas is the day on which our Church celebrates the birth according to the flesh of the Son of God from the Most Holy Mother of God in the cave in Bethlehem. The incarnation of God and His manifestation to people is the greatest event of all times and of all ages. It is the great mystery of faith and piety. God, the Lover of Man, came down to our world and took on flesh and became man, so that man may be raised up to God. God assumes our own human nature, so that we might participate in the divine nature. God became the Son of man, so that man might become the Son of God.

In the Creed we confess that we believe in the Only-begotten Son of God, “who for us men and for our salvation came down from Heaven and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became man.”

In that article, we confess the following fundamental truths:

The second Person of the Holy Trinity comes down and becomes a man out of His great love for man.

The Son and Word of God was incarnate “of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary”.

That means both that His conception was without a man’s seed (“of the Holy Spirit”) and also that the body that He assumed was real, human, and like ours in every way but without the stain of sin (“and the Virgin Mary”).

From the first moment what took place in the womb of the Mother of God was the unique and unrepeatable union of the Divine nature with human nature in the one and indivisible person of the Divine Word. Christ was not a man who was gradually deified but from the beginning of His incarnation He was perfect God and perfect man, the Godman (in Greek “Theanthropos”).

The Mother of God was a Virgin before, during and after the birth. That is why we call her “Ever Virgin”. It is blasphemy to maintain that she who bore within her the Godman Jesus had other children later.

In addition, we call the Mother of God “Theotokos” and we ascribe to her honour and reverence, for she bore and gave birth to Christ our Saviour, who is perfect God and perfect man.

These truths are important for our salvation, that is for our deliverance from sin, death and the tyranny of the devil. There is no salvation far from the Theanthropos Jesus Christ. Death, corruption, suffering and every kind of evil and guile came into the life of man because he lost communion and union with the Triune God, His Creator. If that Person in whom the Divine and human natures are united did not exist, then man could not be deified and acquire communion and union with God once more, and therefore immortality and incorruptibility. In this way, the God-man becomes the only remedy for healing human nature and therefore the sole salvation and hope of all humanity. He refashioned and recreated humankind, and through Him we can know God the Father and receive the communion of the Holy Spirit.

The union of man with Christ takes place within the Church. The Church is not something abstract, but that very divine and human body of Christ. He is the Head and the faithful are His members. In this manner only those who have Orthodox, that is right, belief as this was handed down to us by the Apostles and as it was preserved by the Holy Fathers, and who are in communion with Christ through the Sacraments, and more particularly through Holy Communion, belong to the Church.

My brothers and sisters,

God in His mercy made us members of the Orthodox Church through Holy Baptism. He made us worthy to live within the life, Grace and fruits of the Holy Spirit. To live within the mystical body of Christ in communion with all the Saints. Let us hold on to this great gift. With humility, love towards God and our fellow men and women, constantly struggling against sin and the devil. Do not forget that the Christian faith is a way of life. A Christian is a person of prayer. A person of love. A person of justice. A person of peace.

Let us thank Christ the Saviour, for through His incarnation He gave us our freedom. And let us praise Him through our virtuous Christian lives.

I wish you all a blessed Christmas. May the grace of our Saviour who was born bless and sanctify you and your families, and may the Light of the spiritual Sun of Righteousness light your lives, banishing the coldness of unbelief and sin with the flame of His grace and love.

With paternal blessings and love in Christ,

+NEKTARIOS
Metropolitan of Hong Kong and Southeast Asia