

From the desk of Fr. Matthew

My brothers and sisters in Christ, as we prepare ourselves for our Lord's Nativity, I would like to share with you the pastoral message from His Eminence Metropolitan ALEXIOS on the beginning of the Advent fast.

HIS EMINENCE METROPOLITAN ALEXIOS' MESSAGE ON ADVENT

"Arise, shine; For your light has come! And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you"
Isaiah 60:1

As we begin the blessed season of the Nativity Fast or Advent, the beginning of our preparation for the Birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the Logos (Word) of God, it seems as if the entire universe is joining us in preparing for this miraculous and momentous event.

Every year it seems that we see wonderful Christmas decorations earlier and earlier, as businesses try to attract customers, and people are already planning elaborate parties to celebrate the season. For many of us, the day after Thanksgiving marks the beginning of the season dedicated to shopping for gifts. And the list goes on. Of course, none of these things is inherently wrong or bad. However as Christians, we must ask ourselves the question: Is this really celebrating the Birth of our Lord?

If we are honest with ourselves, the answer to such questions for true Christians must be, "No," because the Fathers have told us that we should prepare ourselves in a spiritual way, with prayer and fasting and almsgiving to truly celebrate our Lord's Nativity, the Feast Day of Christmas.

Sometimes our gift-giving becomes the center of the season and even our generosity and desire to celebrate the season can lead to a focus on materialism and away from the true meaning of the Birth of our Savior. Yet if we take a moment to reflect, we realize that most gifts are soon forgotten, and also that giving is a good thing which should not be confined only to relatives and friends.

This year I encourage you to use the tools that our Church has provided for us: worship, prayer, fasting and charity to help us prepare ourselves to receive our King as He comes to us as a little baby.

The message of the angels continues to remind us as people of faith to "not be afraid" for "nothing is impossible with God." (Luke 1:30, 37). Indeed, despite the problems and adversities of the times we are in, and the very real difficulties that we face, we are not afraid because of our faith that God is with us.

On Saturday, December 12, and Sunday, December 13, we will once again welcome Fr. Grigorios Tatsis to our community. As many of you know, Fr. Grigorios is the Ierokyrix, or traveling preacher and confessor, of the Metropolis of Atlanta.

On Saturday, December 12 Fr. Grigorios will be at the church to hear confessions. If you would like to receive this most important Sacrament of our Holy Orthodox Church, please call the church office to schedule a time to meet with him.

Please consider reading the following article on the website of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America to prepare yourself before Confession.

<http://www.goarch.org/ourfaith/ourfaith8476>

On Sunday, December 13, Fr. Grigorios will celebrate the Divine Liturgy with Fr. Matthew.