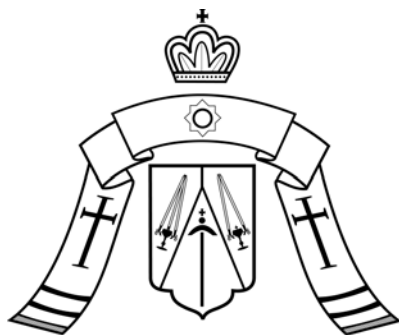


Christ is Born! Glorify Him!



We have arrived at the Feast of the Nativity according to the flesh of our Lord and God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, and our hearts are filled with joy at the coming of Christ into the world. We rejoice because we see, in the cave of Bethlehem, the love that our God has for us: that He called together the elder Joseph to be foster-father; the young, pure Mary, ever-virgin, to be Theotokos; the shepherds of the local tribes to be heralds; the Magi from cultures foreign and far off to be emissaries and prophets — all to be united into a single, mystical Body, a family, at the Nativity of the Father's Son.

We must stand in wonder at this beautiful mystery. Shepherds, elders, children, foreigners: in the Nativity, beneath the star of Bethlehem, they are brought together. They are made one. And we, too, stand beneath the Lord's star. In our temples, whether they be great cathedrals or the humblest parish church, the Lord draws us to be with Him in Bethlehem, to stand with all those He has called to His earthly birth in this manner for millennia. We stand with that same righteous Joseph; we sing with the Mother of God, with the shepherds and kings; and we ourselves stand *together*, side-by-side, one Body and one family in Christ.

On this Great Feast, above all, my fervent desire is for us to be one — one family, whole and complete only when we stand together in the service of the Lord. Just as a husband is not a husband without a wife, as a son is not a son without a father, so we are never fully one family of Christ's precious children unless we abide with one another. Do we not hear the voice of our Saviour calling us to Him, and in that same act calling us together? Let us rise up, then and respond! Let us find ways, however small or great, to make our unity more visible, more tangible. There are always obstacles to coming together, to being united: but let us rise up before these challenges as the Magi once undertook their long and arduous journey, knowing that at its end was the True Light that would transform their existence.

To all the beloved children of the Western American Diocese: may the joy of this Feast inspire us all with deep love and profound gratitude toward our Saviour. I greet you in love, and joyfully bestow upon you the blessing of the Feast.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Archbishop Genevieve".

Nativity of Christ
25 December/7 January 2014