



*Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace and goodwill
toward men.
(Luke 2:14)*

Your Graces, Reverend Fathers, Brothers and Sisters!

It is with the Incarnation of the Word that man can realize God's infinite and boundless love for His creation. Out of love for us did the Son of God humble Himself to become man, in order to heal the relationship between God and man. Before the humble birth of Christ, in the Bethlehem cave, St. Gregory the Dialogist writes in his *Dialogues*, "With sin we were so distant from God that the angels, God's citizens, eliminated us from their company." The rift created by the Fall between God and man was so great that it reverberated to every aspect of Creation and tore asunder the bond of love that tied the Heavens to the earth. "It was not until the King of the Heavens took upon our flesh", St. Gregory further writes, "that the Angels restored peace with us (humanity)... and once again considered us their companions." It is for that reason that the angelic choir appeared to the shepherds singing, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace and goodwill toward men" (Luke 2:14). For no longer was man estranged from God, and Creation could once again achieve a Divine Peace in the Person of Jesus Christ. At the same time, with the birth of Christ, man could once again inherit that dignity for which he was intended – being made "in (the) image, and (the) likeness" of God (Gen.1:26). The magnificence of the Nativity of our Lord is that it is a healing of Creation, and the restoration of man to that dignified place intended for him by God.

However, since Christ's humble birth 2000 plus years ago, man has done everything possible to rip that Divine bond apart. Man has practiced every type of violence, conjured false religions, concocted deviant philosophies, has gone so far as to deny God, even accuse God of creating errors and other malicious blasphemies, and yet; through it all, God has not rescinded nor curtailed His bond with man. Christ's message, and offer, of Salvation towards man has remained unchanged. The angels still consider us their companions in Creation, and man still is created in the image of God and can attain His likeness.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, with these holy days of the Nativity let us begin to demonstrate to our Lord sincere gratitude for His love towards us by following His example of self-sacrifice. Let us thank God by restoring in our lives the Christian dignity of the likeness of God through virtuous acts of charity and love towards our fellow-man. Let us combat the plagues of evil and hate not with redundant banter, but with actions that inspire others to follow the healing and peace offered by Christ. Let us truly be worthy of glorifying Christ by emulating Him by healing rifts and divides amongst us, so that we can say with all sincerity:

CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!

+ KYRILL

Archbishop of San Francisco and Western America

The Nativity According to the Flesh of our Lord, God and Saviour, Jesus Christ
25 December 2023 / 7 January 2024