

## SERMON on the Nativity of Christ, December 25, 2018

Today the Son of God bows the heavens and descends to the earth, yet He remains in the bosom of the Father. Today, He who is invisible becomes visible. Today the Co-eternal Lord is born of a woman, who was a virgin before giving birth, in giving birth, and remains everlasting a pure and chaste virgin after giving birth to the One who is the author of creation. The One who is pre-eternal, incomprehensible and unapproachable to all, is now as a babe embraced by maternal virginal arms. He who covers the heavens with the clouds is now as a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes. He who has created all things in wisdom is now swaddled as a babe and laid in a manger of irrational beasts in order to save mankind from irrationality and sin. He who nourishes all things now as a babe drinks His mother's milk. God, without undergoing change, has become a man, and makes man as a god, as the prophet foretold: *"I said: Ye are gods, and all of you the sons of the Most High!"* (Psalm 81:6). The blessed ears of the shepherds heard the Angels singing in the air: *"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and good will towards men!"* (Luke 2:14). Where is this peace on earth that the Angels announced to the shepherds in Bethlehem? With the coming of the Son of God on the earth, peace began to reign at first in the small, chosen flock—His Church, in the Apostles whom He often taught this peace, and later in the whole kingdom of grace, His Church, which spread throughout the world. A whole kingdom is established by the Lord—a kingdom which is eternal, universal, and orderly: with laws, rules and sacraments; with an order of services, guidelines for life and interpersonal relationships. This kingdom is the One, Holy, Orthodox, Apostolic Church, where there ever abides peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father. The Church was always hated and persecuted, but nevertheless possesses an inner grace-filled peace—even during the cruelest persecutions, for God has always been and always will be in it, delivering it from all calamity according to His word that *"the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"* (Matthew 16:18). Therefore, every truly believing person who keeps Christ's commandments, every truly repentant sinner has the peace of Christ within himself, and no external troubles of this world can destroy it. May the peace and joy of salvation brought into the world today ever reign in our hearts. As the magi brought gifts to the Lord today, may we also worthily bow down before the Divine babe who lays in a cave, and offer Him, according to our strength, the gifts of compassion, love, kindness, praises and pure prayers of repentance and confession. May we receive enlightenment, consolation and salvation, through the mercy and unspeakable loving-kindness of the One who was incarnate for our sakes, the Son of God, to Whom be glory, honor and worship, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.