



# What are you doing this Nativity?

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Three months ago, I was in the mall to buy a certain item and while walking into a department store I noticed that Nativity items were being set up in a display of lights and glitter to welcome the season. I couldn't help but wonder, is it that time already? We're still a good three months away! The retailers, who make a great portion of their financial gain during this part of the year, are always anxious to capitalize on the Nativity season and the shoppers are only too eager to help. Everyone is swept up into the commercial frenzy of the season... what to buy and for whom, what to cook, what to bake, what to decorate, what to wear, whom to invite or where to go. So much to do in so little time! Shopping and celebrating have become synonymous with the Nativity.



manifested in the flesh" in 1 Timothy 3:16. What a powerful and awesome fact this is! How often do we just stop for a moment and reflect on this statement? St. Athanasius meditated on it in this way: "He took our body, and not only so, but ? He took it directly from a spotless, stainless virgin, without the agency of a human father"<sup>1</sup>Why did our Lord do this? "He did this out of sheer love for us...that He might again return incorruption to men who had fallen into corruption and make them alive through death by the

appropriation of His Body and by the grace of His Resurrection. Thus, He would make death to disappear from them as utterly as straw from fire.<sup>1</sup>Our Redeemer took on the form of a servant and resembled us in every way, except for sin. He was born as a lowly person, a pauper, He felt hunger, He felt thirst, He felt weary and He felt grief. He did that so we may be comforted by the verse **"He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted"** (Heb 2:18). Our God and Savior left His glory and became humble and lived among us, unworthy as we are, in our fallen world of sin and pride that He may teach us humility by which He may exalt us. He *"Broke down the middle wall of separation"* as St. Paul teaches us, so we may be reconciled with God and regain our original likeness. St. Gregory expressed the Incarnation in this way in the Divine Liturgy: "Neither an angel nor an archangel,

It's right to celebrate and we should celebrate!

Keeping in mind two things:

- (1) why we celebrate and ...
- (2) how we should celebrate.

Well, if we remember the "why", then it should be natural to proceed to the "how".

## What are we celebrating?

If you simply said "the Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ", you would be right, but there are so many mysteries and gifts of the Incarnation within this simple statement. The Holy Bible tells us that "God was



neither a patriarch nor a prophet, have you entrusted with our salvation, but You, without change, were incarnate and became man and resembled us in everything, except for sin alone and became for us a mediator with the Father”. What better reason do we have to rejoice than being reconciled with the Lord our God and being united with Him in His kingdom for eternity? How joyful should a servant be when his chastisement has turned into salvation! What a gift of love and sacrifice, indeed worthy of praise, thanksgiving and celebration!

## How should we celebrate?

In a Christian’s life, Jesus Christ the Lord is the “all in all”. So it is fitting that we give honor and glory to our Lord and Savior on His feast days and all throughout the year, for He is our source of peace, goodness and every blessing. In all we do, His name should always be on our lips, to call upon, to thank, to supplicate Him and to perpetually praise His Holy Name.

As the season for the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord approaches, there are a multitude of things to do beginning with the fast up to the day of the Feast of the Nativity.

- Fast with the Church in preparation for the birth of the Lord.
- Attend Kiahk Praises and encourage all loved ones, family and friends alike, to attend with you. Meditate on the beautiful words in the Kiahk Psalmody in honor of the Theotokos. Enjoy the hymns and praises in the special Kiahk tunes that the Church established for this wondrous season. Every week during the month of Kiahk in the Divine Liturgy, the Church commemorates the events leading up to the Holy birth in its readings of the Katameros (the Coptic Lectionary). Meditate on those readings and

enjoy the wonder of the Lord’s preparation for the Incarnation of His only-begotten Son.

+ Read and reflect on the fathers of the Church’s writings on the Nativity. Many of them have written beautiful and inspirational hymns and praises in honor of the Virgin Mary and the Incarnation of the Lord. For example, you can read the book by St. Athanasius the Apostolic **On the Incarnation of the Word of God**, from which his thoughts are quoted at the beginning of this article, or the beautiful hymns written by St. Ephraim the Syrian “The Nativity of Christ in the Flesh”. St. Ephraim wrote the following touching meditations in his second hymn (there are nineteen in all):

*“Blessed is the Shepherd who became a Lamb for our reconciliation, Blessed is the branch who became the Cup of our Redemption! Blessed also is the Cluster Fount of medicine of life... Let us praise Him, who prevailed and quickened us by His stripes! Praise we Him who took away the curse by His Thorns! Praise we Him who put death to death by His dying!”*

That was just a small taste of the sweet words of this great father of the Church about the newborn Savior.

+ When you attend the beautiful Divine Liturgy of the Glorious Feast of the Nativity, enjoy the celebratory festal tunes and joyful words full of honor for the newborn Christ the Savior as you listen to the fraction prayer proclaiming:

*“O Master, Lord our God, co-creator, invisible, infinite, unchangeable, and immeasurable, who have sent His true Light, His only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ the co-eternal Logos. He who is in the Fatherly bosom at all times has come down and dwelt in the undefiled virginal womb.”*



A powerful meditation reminding us of the sacrifice of the Father and of the Virgin Birth.

+ Remember those who are less fortunate in health and finances and those who are lonely. Bring them special gifts of clothes, food and the true gift of time by giving of yourself by truly listening to them and to their needs and by reading the Holy Bible to them and sharing with them the special blessings of the season. Our Lord asked us to remember the poor: “Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me” (Mat 25:40). Remember what St. James taught us in his epistle about pure religion: “Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble” (Jam 1:27). He gave us the greatest gift by sacrificing His only-begotten Son; it is only appropriate that we obey and give back. Although we may be able to offer only a fraction of what He gave, we can never out-give or out-do God in His generosity.

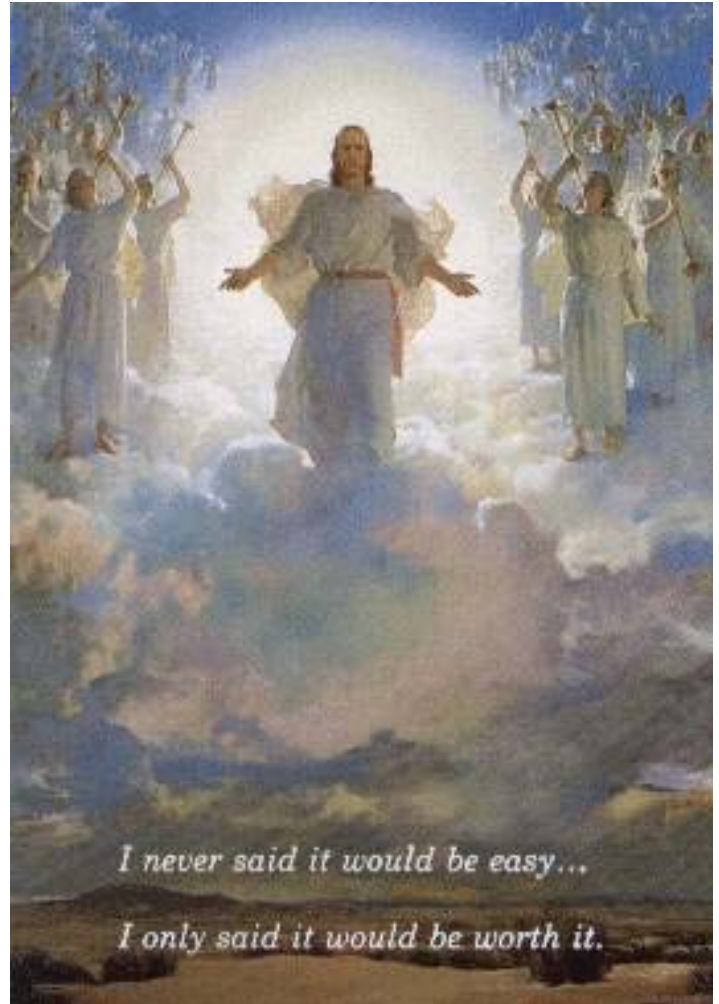
Finally, this last thought about the miracle of the Incarnation of the Word:

“He Who contains the world  
how can Mary’s arms Contain Him?  
He Who carried the world,  
Joseph’s lap carried Him!”<sup>2</sup>

### References ...

<sup>1</sup> On the Incarnation of the Word of God,  
St. Athanasius.

<sup>2</sup> Nicean and post-Nicean Early Church Fathers



**“No one can take God  
as his father unless  
he takes the Church as  
his mother.”**