

ENCYCLICAL

for the Holy Nativity of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ

The Incarnation of the Word and the New Testament of Grace

The inscription of the “divine qualities” in our hearts...

Beloved Brethren in Christ and Children in the Lord,

a) “And He dwelt among us”

TODAY, once again, the People of Christ, the New Israel of Grace, is rejoicing and celebrating, because

“the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory.”¹

The Son of God, Who is without beginning and everlasting, takes upon His divine Person our humble nature and becomes a man in time; and He remains with close kinship among us; and we partake of His glory and majesty; and we draw on the fullness of His Grace and Truth, which flow inexhaustably into His New House, His blessed Body, our Holy Orthodox Church.



“And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace” for “grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.”²

Just as a cistern receives water from the fullness of the source, in the same way we also receive Grace from the fullness of the God-Man, our Saviour Christ, Who is the first source of all things, the

“very source and root of every good, life itself, and light itself, and truth itself.”³

And the supreme good granted us by the Incarnation of the

Word is the potential for our spiritual rebirth, that we might truly be children and sons of God, insofar as, according to the Holy Fathers,

“The Son of God became man, so that men might become sons of God.”⁴

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b) “We have made a New Covenant”

IT IS QUITE appropriate for us, today, to ponder on the meaning of the very important prophesy of the Holy Prophet Jeremias, a prophesy fulfilled in the Holy Gospel.



“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel,” the New Israel of Grace: *“I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.”⁵*

Our Lord and God, with the coming of the Messiah, gathers His New People, Which is comprised now of Christians from all the peoples of the inhabited world, and makes a ***New Testament***, which is ***“better,”⁶*** that is, more excellent and lofty, than the Old Testament.

Our Christ is the Mediator of this ***“better Covenant,”⁷*** which has been established ***“upon better promises”⁸***; that is, it offers the Christians far more excellent promises.

And the New Law of Grace is no longer written with material letters on tablets of stone, or with a an instrument of metal, but is inscribed in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

* * *

c) “Give me thine heart”

IT IS PRECISELY on account of this, that the Lord constantly seeks our heart:

“My son, give me thine heart...”!⁹

If our heart has been given to God, then it is melted anew in the flames of Pentecost; then it is remolded and renewed; then Christ is formed in us; then a man has been born *“from above”* and is truly *spiritual*, for

“that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”¹⁰

On the groundwork of the New Testament, by the intercession of our Saviour Christ, we become children of God, when the *“divine qualities”¹¹* are impressed upon our hearts.

This is accomplished by the labor of constant **Repentance** and our partaking of the **Holy Mysteries**, insofar as we remain, at the same time, in the never-ceasing **memory of God** and the persistent return of our **mind** into the **heart**, where it meets and is joined with our Lord in love.

“The intellect joined to God,” says St. Maximus the Confessor, *“through prayer and love with time becomes wise, good, powerful, compassionate, merciful and long-suffering; in short, it takes within itself almost all of the divine qualities. But when the intellect withdraws from God and attaches itself to material things, it either becomes self-indulgent, like some domestic animal, or, like a wild beast, fights with men for the sake of these things.”¹²*

So let us labor, beloved children in the Lord, with persistent effort and diligence for the cleansing of our heart, so that there might be inscribed in it not only the *“laws”* of God, but also the *“divine qualities”* and the *“divine attributes,”* so that we might show ourselves faithful to the *“Covenant of Grace,”* by which we have been joined in a personal way with our Lord by Holy Baptism.

We should never forget that when we were anointed with Holy Chrism, we became *“anointed of the Lord”¹³* we were transformed into “christs”— that is, we were united with our incarnate

Saviour: ***“He and we have become one.”***¹⁴ To Him, then, is due glory and thanksgiving, with the Father and the Holy Spirit unto the ages of ages. Amen!

Holy Nativity of our Savior Jesus Christ, 2004

Your intercessor before the Incarnate Lord,
† *Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Fili*,
President of the Holy Synod in Resistance

1. St. John 1:14.
2. St. John 1:16-17.
3. St. John Chrysostomos, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LIX, col. 91.
4. Evthymios Zigabenos, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. CXXIX, col. 1121A.
5. Jeremiah 38:31, 33 (*Septuaginta*) (Jeremiah 31:31, 33 [KJV]); Hebrews 8:8, 10.
6. Cf. Hebrews 8:6.
7. Hebrews 8:6.
8. *Ibid.*
9. Proverbs 23:26.
10. St. John 3:3, 6.
11. See St. Thalassios of Libya, *Philokalia*, Vol. II, p. 316, § 58 (Eng. ed.).
12. St. Maximos the Confessor, *Philokalia*, Vol. II, p. 74, § 52 (Eng. ed.).
13. St. Nicodemos of the Holy Mountain, *Heortodromion*, p. 177.
14. St. Theophylactos of Bulgaria, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. CXXV, col. 225C.