

ENCYCLICAL
for the Feast of the Nativity of our Savior Christ
The Mystery of the Compassion of God
Justice as Compassion

My Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, Light-Wrought Children of the Church:

At this time, during which the entire Mystery of our salvation is compressed within the liturgical time of Orthodox worship, we have the exceeding blessing of partaking of the love of God the Father, in the Grace of Our Savior Christ and the peace of the Holy Spirit.

This inexpressible gift—to experience, with our whole being, communion with the Uncreated Triune God—becomes yet more stunning on this great day of the Incarnation of the Son and Word of God.

“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”¹

In the Theandric Person of Christ Our Savior, the turbulent heart of man once more found rest. God, in His love for mankind, implanted in man’s innermost being the sacred and blameless yearning for communion of the uncreated Divine Life.

Man, having lost this salvific orientation through sin, under its many names, and having turned his desires towards the cultivation of his egocentrism, is not at peace, finding no complete or abiding satisfaction in anything created; for disillusionment and spiritual death lie concealed in all such things.

“Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord,” exclaims St. Augustine, “and in Thee alone shall our hearts find peace.”

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My Christ-loving Brothers and Sisters:

Let us become, today and evermore, **“heralds of the goodness of God”!**² Man has said—and persists in saying—“no” to God; and yet it was never possible that God should say “no” to man.



The great “yes” of God, Who loves mankind, was—and remains—the Incarnation of His Son. After His Incarnation, Christ is that *Beseecher after Love* at the door of our hearts, awaiting our own “yes,” that He might enter and dine with us.

“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”³

This Divine Mendicant, this Beseecher of our love, so rebuffed even by us Christians, yet so known in His compassion, does not demand of us blind obedience filled with fear.

He but awaits, with fatherly tenderness, for us to respond to His affectionate invitation to “open our door,” to accept His love, to depart from the inferno of our selfishness—*i.e.*, *our self-love*—to encounter Him, the Compassionate One, in the sacred and inmost *Feast of our Meeting*, in reconciliation and rapprochement, in a personal relationship and in communion, which allude to the *Marriage of the Lamb*,⁴ to the *Banquet of the Kingdom*.⁵

He constantly reminds us, through the Feast of His Nativity, that **“I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore have I drawn thee in compassion.”**⁶

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My Brothers and Sisters, Who Bear the Name of Christ:

Let us deeply delve, both today and always, into the great *Mystery of the Compassion* of God.

Our helper and initiator in this mystagogy is the Immaculate *Theotokos*: She who uttered the mighty “yes” to the compassionate *Beseecher* after our love: .

The Theotokos opened her being to God and bridged the gap between the Un-created and the Created, which were separated, one from the other.

“Rejoice, Bridge conveying those of earth unto Heaven,”⁷ we pray daily to our Most Blessed Mother.

In the Incarnation of the Word, the Judge withdraws and there appears the Friend, full of tenderness, Who reveals His *Justice* to us as *Compassion*, as the wondrous keenness with which He cares for man, His Image.

God the Father, through the Incarnation of His Son, is revealed as *Just*, not in a legalistic sense (in the sense of forensic justice or of passing judgment), but in the sense of His compassionate fidelity to *His Covenant*—to His Divine desire to save and renew mankind.

In the Justice of God—that is, in His Divine Grace and Munificence, in His *Compassion*—we are all called to believe, accepting it with filial gratitude and love; for **“Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.”**⁸

Christ has annulled the force of the *Decrees of the Law*; justification and salvation do not depend any longer on our observance of these decrees in recompense, but on our participation in *Compassion Incarnate*, which united the Created and the Uncreated, God and Man, by God's *Compassionate Spreading of His Arms* upon the Precious Cross.

In partaking of the *Banquet of the Kingdom*,⁹ we become one with Christ in His Body and Blood; in receiving the Body and Blood of Our Savior as sustenance, we enter into *Nuptial Communion* with Him; in undergoing the preternatural experience of our Communion with the God-Man, we are made aware that God becomes closer to us than we are to ourselves!

And then, we understand the Divinely inspired Patristic exhortation:

“Behold, my brother, I give you a commandment: let compassion always be preponderant on your scales, until you feel within yourself the compassion of God for the world.”¹⁰

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My Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Our Lord says:

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”¹¹

Let this great *Mystery of the Compassion* of God be the unceasing meditation and delight of our hearts, and let us endeavor, by the intercessions of the *Theotokos* and by the prayers of our much-revered Metropolitan Cyprian, to embody this compassion in our personal lives, becoming in deed and in word **“heralds of the goodness of God,”**¹² unto the glory of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen!

The Holy Nativity of our Savior Jesus Christ, 2008

Your humble intercessor before our Incarnate Lord,
† **Bishop Cyprian of Oreoi**
Acting President of the Holy Synod in Resistance

Notes

1. St. John 1:14.

2. Abba Isaac the Syrian, “Discourse LX.”
3. Revelation 3:20.
4. Cf. Revelation 19:7, 9; 21:2, 9; 22:17.
5. Cf. St. Luke 14:16-24; Revelation 19:9, 17.
6. Cf. Jeremiah 38:3 (*Septuaginta*).
7. “Salutations,” *Oikos* 3.
8. Romans 10:4.
9. See note 5.
10. Abba Isaac the Syrian, “Discourse XXXIV.”
11. St. John 3:16.
12. See note 2.

Note: The Reverend Parish Priests are asked to read the present Encyclical immediately after the Holy Gospel for the Divine Liturgy of the Nativity.