

## December 23, 2009 + The Significance of Christmas



by Fr. Michael Baroudy

from *The Word*, December 1958

Looking back upon what transpired at Christ's birth, how many of the people living then knew the great significance of the Babe's birth? How many knew that history will be divided in two, changed from before Christ to after Christ? How many knew that millions of people around the world would chant music and sing joyous hymns to commemorate the great event?

Usually people don't take stock in realizing the potentialities invested in a child. Whoever thought that the events transpiring on that "Holy Night" would be enshrined in music and art, and that millions of cards would be used by people as a means to wish one another a "Merry Christmas" on His birth and that ministers, the world over, would preach and reach the story of the Holy birth, and choirs would sing his praises?

What is the purpose of His coming into the world? Well, the purpose is two-fold: Redemption and Adoption. Christ's coming into the world was not accidental but rather purposeful. To the Blessed Virgin Mary, the angel said, "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." He Himself said of His own mission upon one occasion, "The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost." God's redeeming love was at the very heart, and the main reason for His coming. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son for its redemption." This is the reason we call the story of Christ's life the gospel, that is, good news. God's tenderest love revealed itself in such a marvelous way to save humanity. Before Christ's coming to human life, the world of human beings knew God as a terrible Judge, One on the receiving end to be appeased with gifts, a just God, who would exact from men the very last debit owed Him. They had then some foregleams of Him as a Redeemer, one who would show pity on men, but never as a God whose love knew no limitations to redeem fallen humanity.

Then, there was another reason—"Adoption, to adopt believers into the family of God, making them sons and daughters of His. All human beings who would be willing to appropriate and appreciate the gift of God, and by faith receive Him into their lives, would become, by virtue of that fact, members of God's family, having special attachments and privileges, inducted into the society of the Blessed, belonging to one Eternal Father, becoming one with the Elder Brother, and one with all believers of all colors, races and nationalities the world over.

"To as many as received Him, to them gave He the power to become the sons of God," was the way the Evangelist put it. As redeemed sons and daughters of God, who are empowered to live as becomes God's children, may we seriously reflect upon God's matchless gift to us, and be concerned to declare by our lives, no less than by our lips, the redeeming love of God to all men, of all colors and creeds. May this hour be one of new vision and dedication to a life of service and newness, of hope, faith and love.

Christmas is unique among all the holidays, holy days, and birthdays that we observe. The story of the first Christmas is so simple that a little three-year-old caught its spirit when she said, "I know what Baby Jesus wants for his birthday—a cradle." In love, she wanted to give him what he did not have when he was born. Yet the Christmas story is so profound that it can be fully expressed only in the deep thoughts of the prologue of John's Gospel.

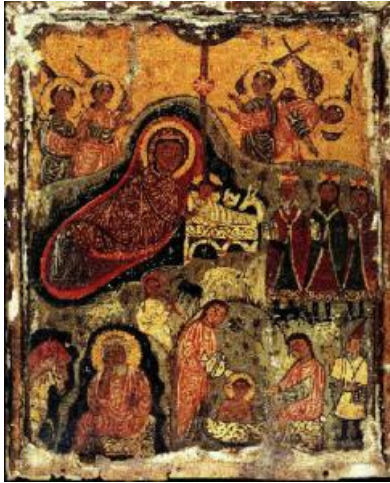
The unique truth of Christmas is that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. The unique outcome was that this

marked the beginning of a new creation, a possible rebirth of humanity. God, through His Son, entered into our human life that we, believing in Him, might receive power to become "sons of God." The Baby who had no cradle but a manger became the one Lord and Savior of mankind! Christianity is not a creed to be recited but a new life to be lived in Christ.

"Thy Nativity, O Christ our God, hath given rise to the light of knowledge in the world: for they that worshipped the stars did learn therefrom to worship thee, O Sun of justice, and to know that from the east of the Highest thou didst come O Lord, glory to thee."

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### **The Nativity of Our Lord and God And Savior Jesus Christ - December 25**



**Kontakion, Tone 3**

Today the Virgin gives birth to the Transcendent One, and the earth offers a cave to the Unapproachable One. Angels with Shepherds glorify Him, the wise men journey with the star; since for our sake the eternal God was born as a little child.