



IRINEJ

**BY THE GRACE OF GOD
THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX
BISHOP OF AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND**

GOD'S PEACE — CHRIST IS BORN!

*Out of burning love, You did come down from heaven . . .
Heaven was amazed, the earth quaked;
Welcome, O Christ! O you peoples, rejoice!
(Holy Bishop Nicholai – The Prologue of Ochrid)*

Our much beloved clergy and monastics, sons and daughters,
Our dear spiritual children,

Today Christ is born according to the flesh, beloved, and heaven is amazed! Today Christ is incarnate in a cave, and the earth quakes! Therefore, *rejoice and be exceedingly glad*, for Christ, the Only-begotten Son of God, who was born in eternity of a Father without a mother, today is born in time. Today He is born of a mother without a father *for us and for our salvation!* And again we exult in the salvific words, *rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven (Matt.5:12)!*

Today the Son of God becomes the Son of Man to free us from our evils and by unburdening us once again and granting us freedom and life in abundance, i.e. love and life eternal! So that we may truly rejoice in our freedom, it is essential for us to love one another. However, not only to allow ourselves to love, but also for us to be loved! And precisely such love is Christ's incarnate love which commands us to first to *love the Lord our God with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our mind*, and thereafter to *love one another, i.e. our neighbour as ourselves (Matt. 22:37-39)!*

Christmas is a day of joy! Christmas is a day of life itself, for it is the fruit of God's love! To reject such love, His love, precisely the sacrifice of God's love, in which even we were created, implies the rejection of the Creator of this world Himself! *For whoever does not love does not know God*, states Christ's Disciple, *whom Jesus loved (John 13:23)*, *for God is love (1 John 4:8)!* And in His perfect love even we sinners uncover a great mystery in life: *we have the ability to love only because He first loved us (1 John 4:19)!*

Only those, Our beloved children, who do not know life and the joy of life can blaspheme against the Living God and be condemned for all times! For only they and such persons who constantly abide in fear, who avoid the Light seeking darkness, who substitute Truth with lies, who avoid encountering God and their neighbours have risen up against Life and are against Life! For we must always be cognisant that God has created us as his beloved beings – out of love and for love which no longer is merely given but also tasked!

Love and our given freedom desire only after communion which is made perfect in God's love! On today's joyous day, God become man! God became one with us and as such admonishes us: *where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them (Matt.18:20)!* And as a person cannot live without love, so also no one can survive without a community — without the Mother Church, i.e. outside of the Body of Christ and His sacrificial love!

Therefore any destruction of a community and communion (i.e. every schism) represents war against God and the destruction of Christ's love and leads to death! A contemporary preacher of love and communion, our Venerable Father Silouan of Athos states: *"If you condemn, if you are enslaved, if you are self-willed, the soul will be laid barren, even if you pray to God"*.

Let us hasten, thereby, only toward an encounter with sincere love and true freedom. Let us hasten, there where the love of humanity has encountered true freedom. Let us hasten, into that community, where the relations of one with the other are proper. Precisely there and through such a community we will uncover that *the Kingdom of God is within* and among us (*Luke17:21*), for we abide in interpersonal love. On the other hand, those who possess everything but *do not have love (1 Cor.13:1-3)*, already in this age abide in hell. However, rejoice and be without fear for Christ our Saviour was born to free us from death and from such thoughtless devastation! Rejoice, for *there is no fear in love, as perfect love drives out fear (1 John 4:18)!*

**Love one another in the fear of God and rejoice always
and in all things be grateful to the Lord!
For this is the mystery of our salvation (1 Thess. 5:16-18)!**

With prayerful regards that the Lord will grant all of us a blessed New Year of the Lord, a new epoch of common love and peace in Christ, We invoke upon all of you His blessings and love, greeting you on this Great Feast of the Nativity of Christ with the most joyous Christmas salutation:

**GOD'S PEACE — CHRIST IS BORN!
TRULY, HE IS BORN!**

Given in Sydney at Christmas in the Year 2010.

Your earnest intercessor before the Divine Infant Christ,

+IRINEJ

Bishop of Australia and New Zealand
Bishop-administrator of the Diocese for Australia and New Zealand
New Gracanica Metropolitanate