



Beloved daughters and sons in Christ our Savior,

Here we are at Christmas - which is to say, the Good News. Prophets of ancient times announced it more than two thousand years ago and it has taken place at Bethlehem. Even today, however, we are announcing it to the world, as if Christ had just been born in a humble manger somewhere in Palestine.

There is a very ancient anaphora in the Celtic Orthodox Liturgy that we use for the Feast of the Nativity. During the thanksgiving prayer, it exults with these words: “Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth to men of good will, for our redemption has come to us. The ancient expectation of the people has come; the resurrection of the dead which had been promised is here, and the eternal object of the expectation of the blessed has flashed like lightning.”

The day we have long waited for has arrived. It is time to announce to the world that what it is so desperately looking for in outer artifices is to be found within the most intimate part of man’s heart. It is a hidden treasure, a secret source at the root of our being. It is the key to the mystery of Divine Love in which everything exists and grows to fulness – the very key to the life of all that exists.

In these troubled times people, in their anxiety – and crushed by a savage destructive economy – sometimes express themselves in revolt. For them the Good News of Christ’s birth must necessarily take on a concrete meaning. The Church’s mission is to reveal the way that leads to Christ and to open hearts shut tight by an ego continuously exalted by the materialistic spirit of the world. Men suffer and are driven to despair, creation suffers and awaits the liberation to which it too has been promised. But it is up to us Christians to bear this promise within us, to live it, to give witness to it like a lighthouse for all those who are looking for hope.

The Apostle Paul said: “For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich. (2Co 8:9) The richness of God is the infinite power of His Love and infinite goodness, of His inexpressible desire to give us Life in abundance. For that, by faith, we must seize the mystery of evangelical poverty summed up in the first beatitude: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (Mt 5:3) Our Christian communities only have meaning if they live by this beatitude, for it expresses the profound meaning of Christ’s Incarnation. God made Himself like the poorest of His creatures. He came down into our hells so He could reach us by becoming one of us, by becoming us. Christ reveals His salvific Love in the profound wounds of our being by restoring the lost link with the vivifying source of the Holy Trinity.

As I give you my apostolic blessing on this marvelous night, I ask that the Lord grant each one of you the revelation of the Child-God’s birth in the most intimate part of the mystical grotto of your heart. May this birth be the beginning of a radically new life guided by the Spirit, and that our Churches may be the river of the water of life spoken of in the Book of the Apocalypse. (22:1)

Marc – Primate of the Celtic Orthodox Church