



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF CHICAGO

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΣΙΚΑΓΟΥ

December 25, 2021

The Nativity According to the Flesh of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Falling in love is a profound experience because love is more than feelings and emotions; it surpasses biology and chemistry; it transcends ethics and morality; it is not bound by precepts and prohibitions. Love is life-giving; love is liberating. *God is love* (1 John 4:8).

From the earliest moment of conception, we receive God's love. This creates in us a natural drive to love and to be loved by others—God and neighbor. Certainly, the search for love is arduous. Nonetheless, life without love is unbearable. Saint Ephraim the Syrian describes this in a most striking manner: *Until we find love, our labor is in that land of thorns, and we live by the sweat of our brow. But once we have found love, we partake of the heavenly bread, being nourished without labor and fatigue.*

Since the time of our primordial ancestors, human beings have sought deeper experiences of love. Angelic hosts, prophets, and the Law were offered to us as guides in our quest. And while these aids certainly comforted us, our hearts ached for something far more profound—we sought to be united with love itself.

On Christmas Day, love assumes human nature so that it may take hold of our hand. Today, God becomes man so that man can finally love. As we celebrate the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ, I pray that we may be renewed by God's love and reflect on how it may help shape our relationships with others: with friends and enemies, with peers and colleagues, with parents and siblings, with spouses and children.

Friends, *let us love one another, for love is from God!* (1 John 4:7)

A Blessed Christmas to you and yours, and a Happy and Loving New Year. Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

With paternal love in Christ,

† NATHANAEL
Metropolitan of Chicago