



# GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF CHICAGO

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## ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΣΙΚΑΓΟΥ

### CHRISTMAS 2011

*Ἐκ γαστρὸς πρὸ Ἐωσφόρου ἐγέννησά σε· ὤμοσε Κύριος, καὶ οὐ μεταμεληθήσεται.*  
*"From the womb I have begotten You"; the Lord swore, and will not change His mind.*  
— *Prokeimenon of the Nativity Matins*

Dearly Beloved,

The brief hymn chanted at the Matins of the Nativity, from Psalm 110 (109 LXX), reminds us of the great care that our Lord God takes for us in His unwavering love and desire for our salvation. From the beginning of the world, the Lord desired that we "may have life," and "have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). As we celebrate the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ, let us be thankful that the Lord "will not change his mind," and continues in all things to bring us to everlasting life in the communion of the Church, the Body of Christ.

There is no need for the Lord to "change His mind." We, by contrast, must continually change ours. "Change of mind" is the meaning of the Greek *metanoia*, repentance, and is the very first call of our Lord in His earthly ministry to the world. We recall this, for He tells us: "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full" (John 15:11).

Rightly, we glorify Him on the Nativity, with praise and song, with the exchange of gifts to one another as a reminder that He is the greatest gift of all! But Christmas is far more than these things, especially in light of the troubles facing our broken world: economic crises, violence and persecutions, poverty and injustices of all types. If we fail to "commit ourselves and one another, and our whole life to Christ our God," the celebration is a missed opportunity for a new beginning, a new beginning we find in sincere repentance. The joy of Christmas endures as long as we constantly repent, fully committed to allowing the Lord to dwell within us, and as long as we endure in our own baptismal oath to be joined to Christ, to "put on Christ." Only then can we realize that the "Word became flesh" so that we may receive "His fullness" and "grace for grace" (John 1:1, 16). When Christ is born within us, the true meaning of Christmas is shared unto the healing and renewal of this world. May this joy, grace, and abundant life be with you all this Christmas and into the New Year.

With Paternal Blessings on the Nativity,

Metropolitan IAKOVOS of Chicago