



ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE OF THE BRITISH ISLES AND IRELAND

Beloved Fathers and Faithful of this God-Protected Archdiocese,

Two thousand years ago a star from the east appeared to the Magi to show them the Child in the cave. The Magi followed it and offered their gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh to our incarnate God. If Christ came these days, what would we give Him? Do we have a gift to offer Him?

We all know that God does not need anything. All He wants us to offer Him is a loving heart. St. John Chrysostom further adds that we can offer Him no gifts better than our "knowledge, wisdom and love".

Knowledge is necessary for our lives. It is natural for us to study, specialise in a field and for some, obtain a degree. This knowledge makes humanity and the world better. However, we do not obtain knowledge of God in the universities of this world, but through prayer, Holy Communion and love. And the fruit of this knowledge is not the sciences and technology, but the salvation of humanity.

God seeks our salvation, not just the improvement of the condition of the human race. Wisdom is certainly useful for our development and success in this world, but Divine Wisdom is of a different kind and is essential for our salvation. Such Wisdom comes only from the Word of God through the Scriptures.

Lastly, Love is the greatest gift in the life of human beings. God so loved us that He offered His only begotten Son, who died for our sake on the Cross. Such self-sacrifice and Love without limits towards God and all mankind is the only way to heaven.

Behold, this year, you are the Magi and you offer to the Lord who was born in a cave these three gifts: the knowledge of God, the wisdom of the Scriptures and the love for all Mankind. These gifts are given to you by God through the spiritual life of the Church, and now you give God these very same gifts in return.

Pray for the world that does not know God. Pray for others who do not know that the true wisdom exists only in the Bible, because only God is all-knowing. Pray for people who do not know that the purpose of this life is the Kingdom of Heaven, which we can obtain only by love. Pray for everyone on this earth that they may learn that Peace comes only from knowing God, His wisdom and His love.

Today is the Nativity of our Lord, a day to be born in our hearts, our lives and our country. Today the angels cry: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will among men!” (Luke 14: 2). May we join the angels in this hymn for the whole universe. Today the God of Love and Peace is coming. Let us spread love and peace in the world. Today, Christ is born in a cave in Bethlehem. May He be born in our hearts, our homes and our lands.

The whole world celebrates the Nativity in its own way; let us celebrate the Feast as Christians in the way of the Church. Let this Nativity seal our hearts with Knowledge, Wisdom and Love. Let the knowledge of God, the wisdom of the Bible in the Church, and our love for God and the world reign in our hearts! Then Christ will be born today not in a cave but in our hearts!

I wish Wisdom to all our world. May we all realise that there can be no Peace, no Love, and no real Joy without God.

I wish to the whole world and especially to the Middle East an end to all this constant warfare. May true Peace reign in all the world.

I wish to you and yours good health and well-being in God.

May the Lord console everyone who has lost their dear ones and touch their hearts.

May the Good Lord offer us a new year filled with knowledge, wisdom and love.

Christ is Born! ... Truly He is Born!

Happy and Blessed New Year 2018!

+ Metropolitan Silouan

Metropolitan of the British Isles and Ireland