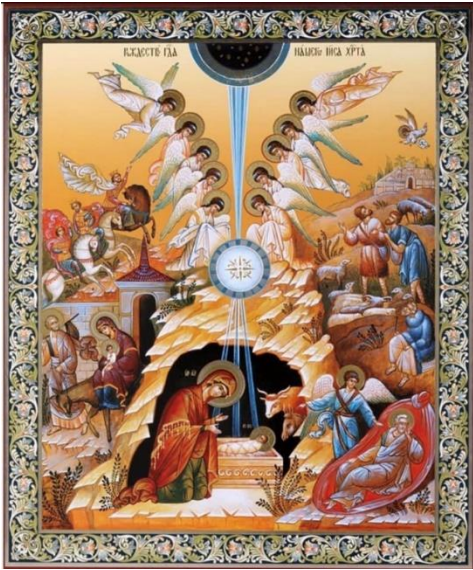


December 25, 2020/January 7, 2021



To the beloved clergy, religious, and faithful of the Russian True Orthodox Church, Archdiocese of North America & the Diaspora--mercy, peace, and love be yours in ever-greater measure.

HOPE. It is a relatively short word, but the power it holds is immense. Hope is what brings us through our times of trouble. It is the promise that things do not have to remain as they are today. It is a light in the darkness. It is that one gift that keeps us from despair.

For far too many years before the birth of Christ, humanity had wandered. They hoped and prayed to be delivered from the curse of Adam and Eve, and to be restored to their original beauty. Despite the fact that it took so long they never wavered in their faith. They never lost hope that one day the Messiah would come and rescue and renew them. Today, their hope becomes reality. Christ comes into the world again today to remind us to never lose hope, because God's promise to us will always be fulfilled.

This past year has been a rough one. We have witnessed death and sickness in volume unheard of in our lifetime. We have seen our neighbors, or perhaps ourselves, friends, and family, struggle to survive. We have seen the fruits of so many good people's years of sweat and labor vanish in the blink of an eye. We have watched the world as we know it change in unimaginable ways. In the midst of this, it can be so tempting to give up hope and to lose faith. But the feast we celebrate today reminds us that there is always a light that will break through the darkness and lead us to a better tomorrow.

Our prayer for you today is that you hold fast to hope. There will be an end to what has seemed like an unending time of devastation. There will, once again, be joy and laughter as we gather together with family and friends. We will build back again. We will triumph if we all work together and never lose sight of the hope that is ours today. That same divine light that guided the Magi to the newborn Christ will also guide us to a brighter future.

With the bestowal of our blessings and prayers for all of you, we remain

Sincerely in Christ,

+ALEXY

Metropolitan and First Hierarch of the Russian True Orthodox Church-MM
Archbishop of Minneapolis and Chicago

+HARALAMPOS

Archbishop of Dallas and Texas

+NICHOLAS

Bishop of Edenborn
Vicar for the Archdiocese of North America & the Diaspora