



EPARCHY OF NEWTON
MELKITE GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

December 12, 2017

Dear Clergy and Faithful,

"Today the Virgin gives birth to the Transcendent in essence, and the earth presents a cave to the Inaccessible. The angels with the shepherds sing His glory and the wise men with the star travel on their way, for to us is born a new child, who is God from all eternity." (Kontakion of Nativity)

This beautiful hymn composed in the sixth century by St. Romanos the Melodist identifies the "eternal God" as the little child born in Bethlehem's cave. Those with lukewarm faith and even many unbelievers express joyful excitement when they see a mother holding her child in her arms. The child becomes a center of attraction – who could not fall in love with a little child, innocent and pure.

This is what Christmas is for us believers: a child as God, God as child. The mystery of Jesus' birth is profound. God in human flesh, and more so in an innocent child who is so easy to be loved. The image of God as a child is powerful: a child has neither authority nor power; a child is without defense and vulnerable, and that is profound power.

The child of Bethlehem enters our hearts without frightening us but by love alone, for God is love. Our world is ruled by authority and power, yet the child God liberates us, desiring our love in return so that we can love Him and others. The Nativity feast is a joyful mystery of love freely given and not imposed. Through this divine child we can see and recognize the loving God and we then become the gift of new life.

Christ comes once again to recreate our broken nature and lead us to being godly, "for He is God from all eternity."

I offer all of you my loving good wishes for a blessed season of the Lord's manifestations in the flesh: His birth, His encounter in the temple, His baptism in the Jordan River. May He grant you good health to continue proclaiming His gospel and enlighten you with wisdom.

With my prayers and blessings, I remain,

Sincerely yours in Christ God,

Most Reverend Nicholas J. Samra
Eparchial Bishop of Newton