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THE NATIVITY SERMON OF ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

I behold a new and wondrous mystery! My ears resound to the Shepherd's song, piping no soft melody, but chanting full forth a heavenly hymn.

The Angels sing!

The Archangels blend their voices in harmony!

The Cherubim hymn their joyful praise!

The Seraphim exalt His glory!

All join to praise this holy feast, beholding the Godhead here on earth, and man in heaven. He Who is above, now for our redemption dwells here below; and he that was lowly is by divine mercy raised.

Bethlehem this day resembles heaven; hearing from the stars the singing of angelic voices; and in place of the sun, enfolds within itself on every side, the Sun of Justice. And ask not how: for where God wills, the order of nature yields. For He willed, He had the power, He descended, He redeemed; all things move in obedience to God. This day He Who is, is Born; and He Who is, becomes what He was not. For when He was God, He became man; yet not departing from the Godhead that is His. Nor yet by any loss of divinity became He man, nor through increase became He God from man; but being the Word He became flesh, His nature, because of impassibility, remaining unchanged...

And so the kings have come, and they have seen the heavenly King that has come upon the earth, not bringing with Him Angels, nor Archangels, nor Thrones, nor Dominations, nor Powers, nor Principalities, but, treading a new and solitary path, He has come forth from a spotless womb.

Yet He has not forsaken His angels, nor left them deprived of His care, nor because of His Incarnation has he departed from the Godhead.

And behold kings have come, that they might adore the heavenly King of glory; soldiers, that they might serve the Leader of the Hosts of Heaven;

women, that they might adore Him Who was born of a woman so that He might change the pains of child-birth into joy;

virgins, to the Son of the Virgin, beholding with joy, that He Who is the Giver of milk, Who has decreed that the fountains of the breast pour forth in ready streams, receives from a Virgin Mother the food of infancy;

infants, that they may adore Him Who became a little child, so that out of the mouth of infants and of sucklings, He might perfect praise;

children, to the Child Who raised up martyrs through the rage of Herod;

men, to Him Who became man, that He might heal the miseries of His servants;

shepherds, to the Good Shepherd Who has laid down His life for His sheep;

priests, to Him Who has become a High Priest according to the order of Melchisedech;

servants, to Him Who took upon Himself the form of a servant that He might bless our servitude with the reward of freedom;

fisherman, to Him Who from amongst fishermen chose catchers of men;

publicans, to Him Who from amongst them named a chosen Evangelist;

sinful women, to Him Who exposed His feet to the tears of the repentant;

and that I may embrace them all together, all sinners have come, that they may look upon the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world.

Since therefore all rejoice, I too desire to rejoice. I too wish to share the choral dance, to celebrate the festival. But I take my part, not plucking the harp, not shaking the Thyrsian staff, not with the music of the pipes, nor holding a torch, but holding in my arms the cradle of Christ. For this is all my hope, this my life, this my salvation, this my pipe, my harp. And bearing it I come, and having from its power received the gift of speech, I too, with the angels, sing: Glory to God in the Highest; and with the shepherds, and on earth peace to men of good will. ✚