

God Is with Us!

By Metropolitan Saba (Isper)

For Your Nativity, O Master, the world celebrates, homes and streets sparkle with lights, and cities put on joyful attire, as do the stores and malls.

For Your Nativity, my Master, people exchange gifts and wish each other a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

For Your Nativity, my Master, churches, organizations, and associations are busy with celebrations, concerts, bazaars, theatrical and scouting performances, and entertaining Christmas events.

For Your Nativity, my Master, everyone is busy and merry.

Indeed, everyone is busy and merry, my child, but not necessarily because of Me, the reason for the feast. Rather, they are occupied by what you generally call “Christmas.” Don't you see that I am absent from almost everything people do for My birth?

Yes, Master. Most of us take the opportunity of your birthday to rejoice, not in You, but in what pleases him.

They replace Me, My child, with so many things, for those who have not experienced the joy and peace of My presence in their lives imagine that they can find them somewhere else.

People are still afraid of Your presence in them, because Your presence changes them. They fear change, O Lord.

I know, My child. However, I came only to be life for you—or rather, to give you the fullness of life. I rejoice when I see you joyful, especially when the outward manifestation of the festivities reflects the purity, love, and virtues that your souls carry.

I came to illumine your hearts and minds, not for you to settle for lighting up your streets.

I came, My child, to be the greatest gift to you, and how I wished you would offer yourselves to Me as gifts as you exchange presents on My birthday!

I came to give you the joy of My eternal presence among you and within you, as you try to find joy in everything through Me. Didn't the angels proclaim to you through the shepherds, “I bring you great joy... a Savior was born for you?”

I came to give you steadfast peace, which none of the evils of the world will be able to shake. Yet you are still afraid of and forgetful of My peace, and I see that you are pursuing it everywhere except in My true presence in you.

I see you adorning your homes and yards immeasurably more than you adorn your souls, as is expected of you by the Gospel that I handed to you.

I did not come to become some kind of brand—even one that carries My name—or to increase the income of industry and trade. I came to you and shared My life with you to the point of death, so that you would share what you have with the needy and poor.

I filled the earth on which I walked with acts of love and tenderness, lest anyone among you might die of cold, lacking the warmth of love.

What is it that you are so concerned about, more and more, with all that keeps you away from the essentials and makes you settle for ephemera!

My child, you are afraid of change toward the better and the perfect! Don't you want to be freed from your fragility, through which the storms of this life, however feeble, cast you right and left and toss you into sadness and despair!

On My feast, I want you to cleanse your hearts, My children, not just your homes. I want you to put Me on and become like Me: anointed ones who fill the earth with eternal joy, love, and peace. I want you to be pure and innocent, so that I can find a dwelling place with you. I want you to share with the poor, as I did when I was among you.

I want you to become apostles who continue My message.

What benefit do you get from glittering appearances if your hearts remain dark?

Do you spend money on external adornments, while you are stingy with the sweetness and beauty that come from within you, which are truly within you?

On this feast, while people are under pressure due to the deteriorating economy, environment, and climate, how I wish you would realize the importance of sharing the blessings you have, no matter how few; that you would spend on the poor and needy; that you would visit the sick, the elderly, and the forgotten; that you would comfort the bereaved, the miserable, and the depressed. How happy I am when I see you proclaim, through your behavior, My compassion and embrace of humanity.

I want your hands to deliver My gifts and your hearts to continue warming the world with My love. I want your actions to console the bereaved, give hope to those in despair, and offer My friendship to the forgotten.

I want you to continue My work, so that the world knows that I am with it.

Open your hearts to change, and don't remain as you are. Make the memory of My birth a true birth for yourselves. Renew yourselves, purify yourselves, return to Me, and you will find life for yourselves.

Do not dig wells for yourselves that do not hold water and leave Me, the living spring.

Do not replace Me with rituals, for without Me they will keep you in death.

Do not forget that I am still standing, knocking at your doors, waiting for you to open them for Me, so I may enter and dine with you.