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*Office of the Chairman*

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*For the Lord your God is God of Gods and the Lord of Lords...He executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing (Reading from Great Vespers of the Nativity; Deuteronomy 10: 17-18).*

To the Reverend Priests and Deacons, the Monks and Nuns, the Presidents and Members of Parish Councils, the Day, Afternoon, and Church Schools, the Members of Philanthropic Organizations, the Youth and Youth Workers, and the entire Orthodox Christian Family of the United States of America.

Beloved Faithful Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On these most blessed days of the Nativity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we are all invited to consider how we may manifest among our neighbors the love, mercy and compassion of the Christ-child. This is especially important because Christmas represents the profound and sacred point in history when invisible God, taking the form of a servant, dwells among us. From this time forth the eternal message of salvation is not merely declared through law and prophetic message, but is finally something, as Saint John the Evangelist says, *that we have heard, that we have seen with our eyes, that we have looked at and touched with our hands* (1 John 1: 1).

From this time forth, therefore, our actions are meant to reflect this tangible reality. Having heard, seen, and touched the Lord, we are called to share with the downtrodden and forgotten the same joy of the Incarnation. To do this, however, we must move beyond selfish endeavors and turn to the needs of others.

Certainly, many have contributed significantly to the Church's evangelism and outreach ministries on parish, diocesan, and jurisdictional levels. These initiatives, however, must never be viewed apart from national and global humanitarian efforts. Through our Assembly of Bishops, we have the unique blessing to participate in the work of our Agencies, and thereby

become agents of the Holy Gospel in more dynamic ways than ever before. As you and your loved ones prepare to celebrate the holy feast of the Nativity, I encourage you to learn how IOCC responds to national and global humanitarian crises; how OCMC brings the good news of the Holy Gospel to all corners of the world; how OCPM cares for and offers hope to those in prisons; how OCN introduces people to Orthodoxy through digital media; and how OCF cultivates the minds and hearts of our young people on college campuses.

During the Christmas season, which is marked by an increase in God's grace upon us, we are called to serve as the all-merciful hands of God in the world. From the very beginning of His public ministry, Jesus Christ is approached by countless people who are suffering and in desperate need of help, and in every such instance, Christ has compassion on them. In like fashion, we must feed the countless men, women and children who go to sleep on empty stomachs; provide shelter to the homeless; and visit our neighbors in prisons and hospitals.

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, as we prepare to receive the Incarnate Lord into the world and into our lives, let us keep in mind that the light of Bethlehem and the joy of the manger of the Nativity are meant to be witnessed and experienced by all of humanity and not just a select few. During this blessed period, I extend to you the blessings of all brother Hierarchs of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States. We wholeheartedly pray that the compassion and mercy of our Lord may be bestowed upon you and your families.

With paternal love in Christ,



+Archbishop Demetrios of America  
Chairman