

# A Christmas Message

to the

## Pious Flock in Great Britain and Ireland

*Today the Virgin giveth birth to the Master within the cave.*

**I**n a small cave of the small town of Bethlehem the Son of God is born: the Pre-Eternal God descends from the heavens, becoming the Son of Man for the sake of our salvation. This invaluable gift of God's love is given to each and every one of us, but not all, as we know, are saved. Only by answering the One Who loves us with our own love, only by humbling ourselves, beholding Christ, Who humbled Himself for us, can we in the small vessel of our hearts receive the salvific power of His Divine grace.

The Holy Church calls the birth of the God-Man a strange and most-glorious mystery: God, the Creator and Master of everything in existence, came from eternity into time; the Boundless One descends into an intimate enclosure... Contemplating once again this miracle, dear brothers and sisters, let us remember that the Nativity of Christ is not simply an "historic event", which happened once in ancient times. This mystery lives in the Church and is repeated every time that a person opens his heart to the Lord.

As He descended, He also bowed the heavens, and came down upon the earth, so today does He descend into our hearts, paying no heed to the smallness and corporeality of the bodily limitations of our hearts, which He Himself created. He descends without diminishing Himself, but expanding our hearts through Himself and turning it into a spiritual heaven, where the Word of God and his power abide eternally. For this reason, the Lord made the human heart deep (Psalms 64:7)—like a deep well, which, according to St Justin of Celije, derives its water from underground streams, the sources of which are in heaven. Stepping upon the earth of our hearts, which was tilled with humility, the King of the World, born in the cave, makes us residents of heaven, communing with his Kingdom and his Divinity.

The Kingdom of God on earth and in heaven is the Church of Christ, the united flock of angels and people. And the great and most-glorious miracle of the birth of the

Saviour, as is his entire salvific House-building, we come to know in the Church. In the temple of God we partake of the glory of God, which shone forth to mankind in the small Bethlehem cave.

The Church calls the Nativity of Christ the “festival of lights.” As then, in Bethlehem, his glory illuminated the dark night and showed the way to all who come to the Saviour of the world with faith and hope, so does that very same glory shine upon us, and, calling us out of the valley of tears to the all-joyous celebration of the Incarnation of God: “a light to shine on us by thy presence, O Christ God; O Light of Light, O Radiance of the Father.”

Let us bring thanks to the Lord for his great mercy—that we belong to his Holy Church. Through the mysteries, through the blessing of the pastors of the Church, whom the Chief Pastor entrusted to teach and perform the sacraments in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Divine grace is poured upon us, the light of God’s love. All of the children of the Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church are made communicants of one heavenly blessing, coming down upon us like the dew of Hermon falling on Mount Zion, for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore (Psalms 133:3).

I wish you all, dear brothers and sisters, to humbly open your hearts in these holy days of the Incarnate Lord, in order to accommodate—not carelessly and not only for a time, but for eternal salvation, for the grace of God, the light of Christ, immersing yourselves in his glory and praising the power of the God-Man.

Christ is born, glorify Him!

Archbishop Mark, Nativity of the Saviour, 2010