

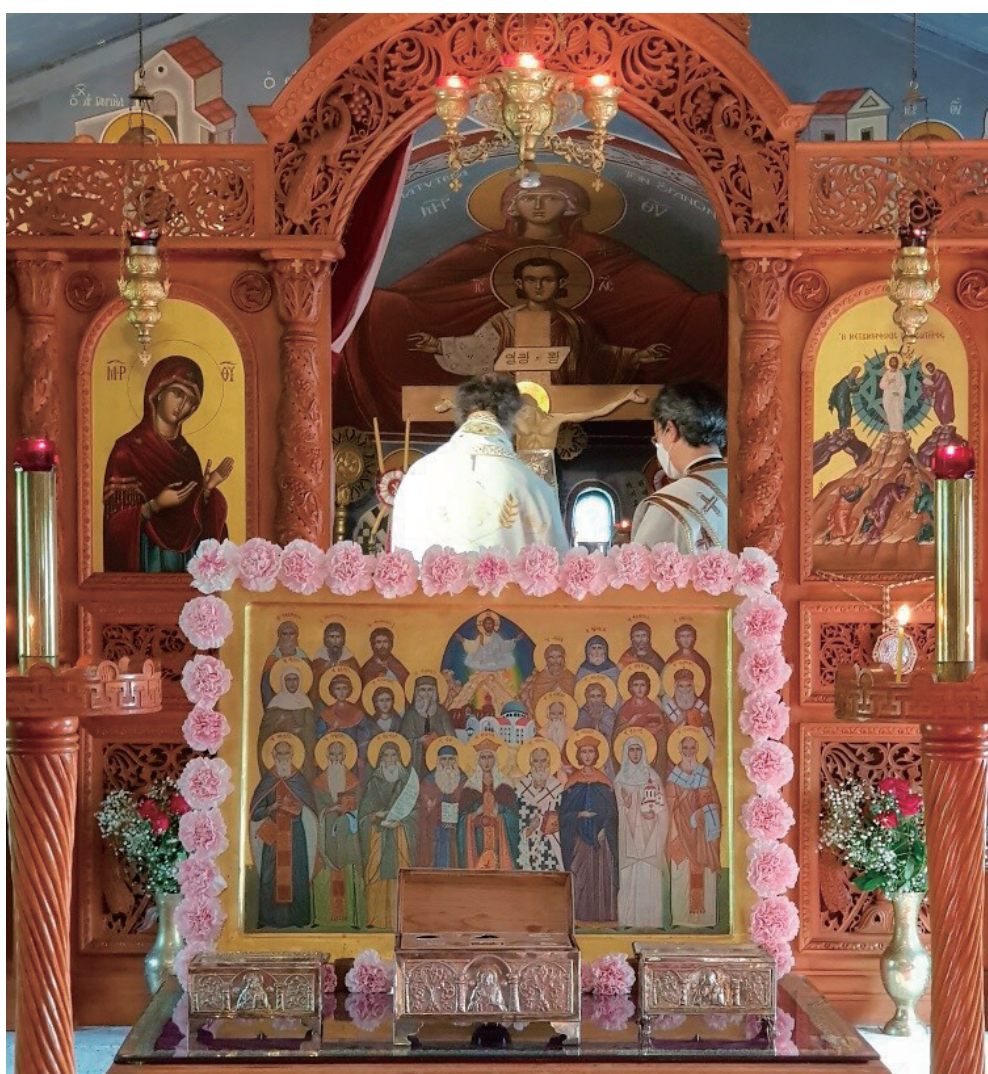
# Odoiporikon

## Orthodox Mission in the East

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*Quarterly Newsletter of the Patriarchal Foundation of the Far East Mission -  
Issue 77 October - December 2021*

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***From the Celebration of the 24 Patron Saints in the  
Monastery of Holy Transfiguration of the Orthodox  
Metropolis of Korea (Gapyeong)***

# Patriarchal encyclical for Christmas

† B B A R T H O L O M E W

BY GOD'S MERCY ARCHBISHOP OF CONSTANTINOPLE-NEW ROME

AND ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH

TO ALL THE PLENITUDE OF THE CHURCH

GRACE, MERCY AND PEACE

FROM THE SAVIOR CHRIST BORN IN BETHLEHEM

Brother concelebrants and blessed children,

Having once again arrived at the splendid feast of the Nativity in the flesh of our Savior Christ, who visited us from the heights, we glorify with psalms and hymns His all-heavenly name. The Incarnation of the pre-eternal Word of God is “the crowning of our salvation,” the “eternal mystery” of divine-human communion that transcends all reason. As St. Maximus the Confessor says so eloquently, “as a loving God, He truly became human assuming the essence of humankind, although the manner in which He became human will always remain ineffable; He became human in a manner that transcends humanity.”

The divine Incarnation, along with the manifestation of the truth about God also reveals the truth and ultimate destination of man, our deification by grace. St. Nicholas Cabasilas proclaims so theologically that Christ “is the first and only One to show us the true and perfect man.” Since that time, anyone who honors God must also honor man, and whoever undermines man also dishonors God, who assumed our nature. In Christ, speaking theologically about God we speak at the same time about

man. The incarnate Divine Economy definitively abolishes the image of God as tyrannical, punitive, and adversary to man. Christ is everywhere, always and in all things the denial of the denial of man and the defender of human freedom. The life of the Church, as the flesh assumed by the incarnate Son and Word of God, represents, expresses and serves this all-saving mystery of divine-humanity.

With this “other fashioning” of man and renewal of all creation in Christ as its banner, the Church today offers the good witness before every development that threatens the sacredness of the human person and the integrity of creation. It lives and preaches the truth of authentic spiritual life and the culture of love and solidarity. Offering testimony “about the hope that lies within us” (1 Pet 3.15), the Church does not in any way regard contemporary civilization as another sinful Nineveh by invoking like Jonah the divine wrath on it and its abolition, but rather the Church struggles for the culture’s transformation in Christ. In our age we need pastoral imagination, dialogue and not argumentation, participation and not abstention, specific deeds and not abstract theory, creative reception and not general rejection. All these do not function at the expense of our



spirituality and liturgical life, but reveal the inviolable unity of what we call the “vertical” and “horizontal” dimensions of the Church’s presence and witness. Faithfulness to the tradition of the Church is not entrapment to the past, but employment of the experience of the past in a creative way for the present.

In this past year, too, the pandemic of the Covid-19 coronavirus has troubled humankind. We give glory to the God of mercy, who strengthened the specialists and scientists to develop effective vaccines and other medications in order to confront this crisis, and we encourage all faithful who have yet to be vaccinated to do so and everyone to adhere to the protective measures by the health authorities. Science, to the extent that operates as a minister of man, is a priceless gift by God. We must gratefully accept this gift and not be misled by irresponsible voices of ignorant and self-proclaimed as representatives of God and of the authentic faith “spiritual advisors,” who, nevertheless, lamentably invalidate themselves through the absence of love for their brethren, whose lives they expose to grave danger.

Most honorable brothers and dearly beloved children,

With unshakable conviction that the life of each of us and the journey of all humanity is directed by the God of wisdom and love, we look forward to a happy 2022, which despite external factors and developments will be for everyone a year of salvation, inasmuch as during its course as well, the movement of history is guided by Christ, who loves mankind and cares for



all things, “who desires that all people will be saved and come to the knowledge of truth.” (1 Tm 2.4)

With God’s will, during the upcoming Holy and Great Week, we shall hold the service of the Blessing of the Holy Chrism in our venerable Center. We regard it as a uniquely divine gift to our Modesty that we shall be deemed worthy to preside over this festive and moving rite for the fourth time in our humble Patriarchal ministry. Glory to God for all things!

With these sentiments, we respectfully worship the child Jesus and wish to all of you, those near and afar, a blessed Twelvetide, as well as a healthy, fruitful in good deeds and filled with divine gifts new year in the Lord’s favor, to Whom belong the glory and might to the endless ages. Amen.

Christmas 2021

† Bartholomew of Constantinople  
Fervent supplicant of all before God

# Christmas in the East and the West

In order for someone to comprehend the importance of Christmas<sup>1</sup> in the East, one must first understand what is Orthodoxy. Orthodoxy is often identified in the West with an antisocial mysticism and ecstasy, perhaps because of the prominent place that worship and prayer have in it. In the East, faith is not a simple ideology, a complex philosophy, a religion that tries to satisfy a person's metaphysical needs and desires. It is not a way of thinking, but a way of life with a social character. With its feasts embraces all life (material and spiritual, present and future, physical and mental) not only of the conscious Christian but also of the simple man.

According to the Church Fathers of the East, the meaning of Christmas is summed up in the following phrase: **God became a humble man, in order to make man (not just moral, good, kind), but god.** Not a powerful god, as Nietzsche imagined and the modern seekers of the Superman seek to realize, but a god who can love, humble himself, and sacrifice himself in order to be resurrected and to conquer eternity, as was the case with Jesus Christ. The birth of Christ in the heart, the experience of inner peace that he actually brings to the heart where Christ is born, despite the war and persecutions unleashed by

1 It is contradiction in terms of, first, that Christ was born in 7 Before Christ and was probably not born at Christmas, i.e. on 25 December. In the West the Christian holiday replaced the Birthday of the Invincible God Sun, as on this day, the light, the day begins to triumph again. In the East the Epiphany (Birth and Baptism) was celebrated on January 6, when in Alexandria the birthday of the patron Aeon (Century) was celebrated.

every modern Herod and are raging outwardly, are the core of the Feast of Christmas and the summary of Orthodox Theology.

It is truly paradoxical but also indicative of European culture, first, that the **symbol**, the image, that dominates these days on the planet, is not that of the homeless and destitute Christ (who celebrates his birthday) but of the exuberant, consumerist and ultimately expendable Santa Claus, as it was designed for the advertising campaign of a drink, which (like the consumerist exaggeration of the days) proclaims that it quenches thirst, yet it makes its user even more dependent on it. Second, it is provocative that the greatest European and American magazines in circulation on such days, instead of respecting the Person celebrating His birthday, publish headline articles sowing in the hearts of their readers the doubt whether the historical Jesus has something in common with the Christ preached by the apostles, whether He was indeed God, and whether Mary was indeed a Virgin. As a result, in Europe, Christmas is statistically recorded as the most dull day of the year.

Christmas is a top manifestation of God's love. Love and especially this divine love cannot be analysed coldly with one's brain, but one tries to feel it, to experience it with all one's existence, by being silent and glorifying. *When you do not know your own birth, how can you understand the birth of Christ?* asks Gregory the Theologian.





In the East, in order for the believer to be able to feel God born in the stable of his heart among the beasts of his passions and desires, he cleanses himself, using especially during the forty days preceding the Feast, three medicines: fasting, confession and prayer. **Fasting** is of particular importance in the Orthodox Church. About two hundred days a year the Orthodox fast from meat and dairy products. Fasting before Christmas<sup>2</sup> is not just abstinence from certain foods, nor is it identified with diet. It is not negative in nature but eminently positive. The believer, deprived of meat, tries to appreciate, to respect the «meat», the whole lifeless nature with which he is related and from which

he feeds. «*The heart of the believer,*» says Saint John Climacus, «*burns with love for all creation, animals, plants, and even out of love and sympathy for Satan himself.*»

At the same time, the Orthodox believer in order to participate in God's table, goes to confession. In the East, confession and the spiritual father are of paramount importance. **Confession** does not equate to an apology or interrogation where appropriate penalties are imposed to appease the wounded righteousness of God. God is love, and sin in Orthodoxy is not a legal fault or an offense, but is identified with the sickness of the soul and body. Sin in Greek means failure. That is, instead of using love to love my fellow man, I use it to worship the divided, crumbling false-idol of myself. The Church is the hospital and the priest is the father, the physician who has not only knowledge, but also experience of how man can be healed. That's why during confession the priest does not

<sup>2</sup> The Christmas fasting, as well as that of the 12 Apostles, was established to last for 40 days in the 6th century. A.D. and was applied in principle to the monasteries. In the event of a major feast during which the Great Hours were not read, the consumption of fish, eggs and cheese was allowed (MG 99, 1713). At the end of the 12th century. A.D. these fasts were imposed on non-monks, clergy and laity alike. See. Stefanidis, Ecclesiastical History p. 321, 464.



hide behind a curtain, but sits next to the believer and discusses the problems with him, as he discusses with his son the issues that concern him. In the end, he recommends appropriate medications according to the personal temperament of the believer. In this way, the believer does not try to uproot the passions, which are innate forces of the soul, but to transform them.

On Christmas night, many children together, constituting a **chorus**, similar to the ancient Greek chorus that played an important role in theatrical dramas, wander around singing from house to house songs about the Feast of Christmas, which are called carols (calanda from the calends, on the first day of the Roman year). These songs do not contain simple romantic Christmas lyrics, but they expose in alphabetical order (so that the song is more easily memorized) truths of

faith, which in the West are called dogmas, while in the East terms, boundaries between truth and lie.

***God descended and resided in the Virgin.***

***King of all and Lord, came to regenerate Adam.***

***All you natives be thrilled and joyous, and the orders of angels rejoice.***

How God became man and was born so humble from an inconspicuous Virgin, the mysteries of Christmas, the doctrines, are not the subject of research and meticulous analysis by the so-called experts. They are sung by innocent children and experienced by the pure hearts of those who look like children. Even the food, the feast, the dancing, have their place in the churchyard and are a continuation of the eucharistic table that Christ is setting to us in the Church.



Top place at the Christmas table possesses the **Christmas bread**, which is a sacred object and which is decorated with many ornaments that have symbolic significance. The first piece of bread on the Christmas table is dedicated to God, while the second to the stranger. The beggar who will knock on the door of the house is not treated simply with sympathy and mercy. He is the **angel**, the messenger of God, because Jesus Christ took the form of the poor and despised. The Christmas table is attended to this day by the poor, the weak, the strangers. Besides, the word «stranger» in ancient Greek is identified with the word «friend». The love and respect for nature is distinguished by the central role played by the **Christmas log**, which preserves the flame of the family fireplace, which burns in the Greek house from ancient Greek times until today in many mountain villages. The priest during Epiphany not only sanctifies people but also the animals and the fruits.

Therefore, Christmas is the day on which Christ Himself is born in the heart of every believer. And when Christ is born into the heart, then all material goods for which so much emphasis is placed on the civilized world, have relative significance. The real Happiness, the real joy, the real Peace floods the soul and the Body. The same thing happened with **the humble shepherds** of the gospel. They did not have Theological knowledge. They did not acquire material goods and riches. But they saw the heavenly light. They heard the angelic hymn. They were the first to worship the humble infant.

The birth of Jesus Christ did not happen only two thousand years ago. Christ



is born today! **«Christ is born, glorify Him! Today (not yesterday) *He's born of a Virgin!*»** When we refer to Christmas, we talk more about a family atmosphere, about walking around the city center, about childhood memories. **But those of us who wish to feel something more spiritual, something deeper and meaningful, must start here and now for the distant town of Judea, the poor Bethlehem. To walk guided by the bright star of love and humility, to find the manger... If Christ is not born within our secret Bethlehem and we do not personally commune his incarnation in the dark cave of our hearts, the stable of the soul will never become heaven!... In order to find God it is necessary to ask for him. In order to ask for him we need to get to know him. But in order to get to know him we have to love him!**

Sotiris Despotis  
Professor of the University of Athens



# First Prize for Missionary Film and New Baptisms in Fiji

With the Grace of God, the translation and subtitling of the Missionary documentary film "HELLO ORTHODOXY" was completed, which presents the tireless and philanthropic efforts of my predecessor His Eminence Metropolitan of Ganou and Chora, Amphilochios, for the foundation, growth, development and smooth operation of the missionary groups of the Islands of the Pacific Ocean Fiji, Tonga and Samoa.

The film is a minimal token of honour and gratitude of all of us to the venerable and respected His Eminence Metropolitan Amphilochios.

The creators of the film, Mr. Angelos Giannoutsos and Ms. Anna Matsi, with the blessing of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople and of our Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, having devoted



hundreds of hours of work, having lavishly offered their valuable abilities, having paid themselves from personal financial resources and not accepting to receive the slightest reward, delivered to the Church and its history an irrefutable witness of the love for God and the people, of a blessed man that all he does throughout his life is to spread the Gospel of Christ and change through it the lives of the people who receive Him.

His Eminence himself, his close associates in Christ and the people who heard and accepted his calling, benefited spiritually



and embraced Orthodoxy, talk about the first moments of the evangelism of the islanders, the change in their lives, their inner transformation and their grateful feelings.

The film won the First Prize for Best Religious Documentary at the "USK's Byzanfest 2021" international digital film festival that took place on November 7, 2021. This award is another recognition of the excellent work of the creators and the particular sensitivity of the subject.

The movie is available for viewing via the following link: <https://youtu.be/VqopVGY17XY>

As a result of everything described in the film, on the island of Vanua Levu in Fiji, in the city of Lampasa where the parish of St. Nicholas and Athanasios are located, during the month of November, the wedding of 2 couples and the baptism of 22 converted children and adults took place. They are the spiritual fruits of our



good and faithful local Priest Fr. Barnabas (ordination by HE Metropolitan Amphilochios) who with his preaching, personal interest in each of his spiritual children, his continuous and loving communion, pleases God.

Our new brothers in Christ are:

Euthymios, Constantine, Nektaria, Souzana, Theodosios, Antonina, Alice, Parthenios, Akilina, Glykeria, Makarios, Chloe, Alexios, Sebastia, Anastasia, Andreas, Anthi, Andriani, Matthew, Onoufrios, Philothei and Barbara.

Please remember them in your prayer for God to give them strength and that they live with His Grace every day.

With thankful wishes to all the supporters of the Mission around the world.

† Metropolitan of New Zealand Myron

# New Year Message

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

Immediately after the timely and redeeming Feast of the Holy Nativity, the wondrous Entry of our Lord Jesus Christ into human history, we now celebrate the beginning of the New Year. Every New Year's Day is primarily a time to offer praise and thanksgiving to the Philanthropic Lord for His generous gift of another year in our earthly life. But the first day of the new year is also a good time to set a specific goal, as a person but also as a Church, toward which we will have to work spiritually during the course of the entire year.

The global community, of which we are all members, is still suffering from the effects of the pandemic. Many problems of physical and mental health, financial crisis, depression and mourning for the loss of our fellow human beings, continue to challenge those around us and among us.

Despite the fact that each of us has our own problems, as Christians, we must not remain apathetic observers of the problems that plague our society. Instead, we should become good Samaritans to every needy person near us.

Our Philanthropic Lord, Who "wherever He went, benefited and healed all" (Acts 10:38), invites us to imitate Him in His work of Charity. Let us, therefore, become the consolation to the sad and desperate, through our prayer and through our practical and voluntary actions; let us become helpers to the mentally and physically ill, as well as supporters to the financially and socially weak. In short, let us become the "neighbor" to our neighbor.

The author of the Letter to the Hebrews assures us that God is pleased with our offering to

our brothers and sisters. He specifically writes: "Do not forget to do good and share what you have with others. With such sacrifices God is pleased." (Heb. 13:16) St. John Chrysostom similarly exhorts all of us to be philanthropic, saying: "No trait is more significant for a faithful person and someone who loves Christ than to take care of one's neighbor and to make every effort for their salvation" (On Repentance, Homily 8, EPIE 30: 288).

Charity or, as it is now called, selfless volunteering, is light. It is the very Light that Christ wants us Christians to be in the world. (Mt. 5:14). Light, which reveals to all people the source of light, that is, Christ, Who is the true Light (Jn 8:12). By volunteering, "our light will shine before people" (Mt. 5:16) and we will thus become an occasion for our fellow human beings to praise God.

Let us, therefore, not dwell merely on ideas and words, but, during the New Year, which the Lord's goodness has bestowed upon us, let every one of us personally and as an ecclesiastical Body engage in works of goodness and psychosomatic support of our fellow human beings. Let us generously and lovingly offer our spiritual or material help to everyone indiscriminately. Let us become the "fine aura" (3 Kings 19:12) of the presence of God in the life of each of our suffering, anxious and desperate brothers and sisters. And you may rest assured that "the God of love and peace will be with us" (2 Cor. 13:11).

On behalf of His Eminence Metropolitan of Pisidia Sotirios, our Clergy and Associates we wish a blessed and Happy New Year for you, your loved ones and for the whole world. Have a blessed New Year!

With much love in the Lord,

† Metropolitan Ambrosios of Korea



# The First Screening of the Online Exhibition of Artifacts of the Orthodox Metropolis of Korea

On Sunday night, December 5, the presentation and first screening of the online Exhibition of the artifacts of the Korean Orthodox Metropolis took place in the Hall of the Missionary Center in Seoul. To view the gallery, please visit [www.greekbyzantineexhibition.com](http://www.greekbyzantineexhibition.com)

In his short greeting, the Metropolitan of Korea stated the following:

*The idea of the Exhibition started about 3 years ago, in preparation for the celebration of the historic anniversary of the completion of 120 years of Orthodoxy in Korea (1900-2020). Yet, while everything was ready in February 2020 – even the Invitations had been printed and distributed for the opening ceremony of the Exhibition at Seoul City Hall, the Covid-19 pandemic came and, unfortunately, canceled it all.*

*As a result, we decided to organize a Virtual Exhibition instead. We are happy that with the help of God we are presenting today to the online public the Exhibition whose title was taken from the saying of the great Russian writer Fyodor Dostoyevsky, “Beauty will save the world.”*

*Before giving the floor to Fr. Antonios Lim, who is going to present you the Exhibition, offering detailed explanations about the content of the Exhibition and how you will be able to watch it, please allow me to point out that through modern technology, these artifacts, which are kept in the Orthodox Metropolis of Korea, will travel for the first time around the world and will remain available to the public for ever. For this very reason, apart from using the Korean language, we have also used English to accommodate those interested in having access to it anywhere in the world.*

*Next, I would like to thank those who contributed to the completion and implementation of the Exhibition.*

*Firstly, Fr. Antonios Lim, who had the overall responsibility for the program.*

*Secondly, Mrs. Eleni Lim and Mr. Heliodoros Sin, who worked hard, not only for the design of the Exhibition’s platform but also for the photography of the artifacts.*

*Thirdly, Mrs. Eleni Cho and Mr. Andreas Chamalis, for the proofreading of the texts and the subtitling of the lectures and videos as well as many other details.*

*Fourth, Mr. Lucas Lim, for the construction of the Exhibition website and the posters.*

*Fifth, the Municipality of Seoul, the Greek Embassy in Seoul and the Greek Ministry of National Defense for supporting our effort.*

*We suggest that you may watch the Exhibition in the peaceful environment of your home and, if you like it, please promote it to others, so that more and more people get to know the spiritual and cultural treasures of the Orthodox Metropolis of Korea.*

*I will conclude my short address by stressing that in our time and age, ugliness abounds in the world. Therefore, it is time to promote Beauty as a means for saving the world!*



# Baptism at the Holy Monastery of the Transfiguration

The baptism of the old lady Niki KIM Choon-Il in the Holy Monastery of the Transfiguration of the Savior in Kapy-eong, on Saturday, October 2, by Fr. Antonios Woo, was a very moving event. Mrs. Niki is a neighbor of the Monastery. Many years ago she had met Metropolitan Sotirios and Sister Agathi and had begun her approach to the Orthodox Church. In the last two years, however, her catechism began systematically and finally came the blessed day of her baptism. Thus, Mrs. Niki is the first newly enlightened person from the area close to the Monastery.

Those who participated in the celebration of the twenty-four patron saints of the Korean Church on Sunday, October 3, rejoiced greatly to see her in her white robe and her lit candle approaching the Eucharist to receive the Holy Body and the Holy Blood of Christ.



The joy of all of us on earth was united with the joy in Heaven, since the Lord himself said that “great joy is made in Heaven” every time a person becomes a member of His Kingdom.







## The celebration of the 24 patron saints of the Korean Church

October 3 is a public holiday in Korea because the founding of Gojoseon, which is the first state of the Korean nation is celebrated.

Every year on this day the Korean Orthodox Metropolis celebrated the memory of the twenty-four patron Saints of the Korean Church, whose holy relics are kept in the Holy Monastery of the Holy Transfiguration in Kapyeong.

As the holiday fell on a Sunday this year, the celebration in honor of the 24 Saints was held, but with a very limited number of believers due to coronavirus restrictions. In previous years, the faithful participated in this celebration coming from all the parishes of the Orthodox Metropolis of Korea.

On the eve of the previous day, (Saturday) the Service of the Great Vespers was officiated followed by the Service of “Artoclasia” (the breaking of the bread). The

next day the Service of Orthros (Matins) was sung, including hymns of the feast of the Saints. The Divine Liturgy followed, at the end of which a special prayer was offered to the Lord to protect the world from the coronavirus, through the intercessions of His Saints.



# The Wedding of Andreas Chamalis and Eleni Cho Hye-won

On Saturday, October 16 at 3 p.m. the Sacrament of marriage between Andreas Chamalis and Eleni Cho Hye-won was performed at St. Nicholas Cathedral. Andreas Hamalis was born into a priestly family in Neos Skopos, Serres, and grew up in the Church. Eleni Cho Hye-won was born into a Korean Orthodox family. Following the Sacrament of Marriage, Metropolitan of Korea Ambrosios delivered the following sermon:



*The family institution is going through a great crisis in our time. This is clear firstly, from the fact that many young people today do not wish to get married, preferring to just live together with a partner, and secondly, if they get married, they do not want to have any children. Therefore, we have reached the point where Korea now has the highest birth deficit rates in the world.*

*That is why the decision of two young persons to unite in marriage out of love for each other and out of respect for the God-given institution of the family, is a spiritual revolution, a real resistance to the spiritual, moral and social evil of today's society.*

*This is the reason why all of us, who have gathered here today to attend the sacrament of Holy Matrimony, feel really joyful and are overcome with emotion. Because our dear Andreas and Eleni came to church today to give before God a promise of eternal love and devotion*

*to each other. They came to receive the blessing of the Church, in order to begin the creation of their family based on the solid and unshakable foundation of faith and love.*

*My dear children and brothers, Andreas and Eleni,*

*Today, all of us accompany you with our prayers and we wish you to lead a life of love and "holding hands on the path that will lead you to deification". You are accompanied by the deep love and heartfelt wishes of your good parents, who gave birth to you and raised you with so much effort, as well as your brothers and all your relatives.*

*Your relatives from Greece, America and Germany, many of whom would be here today in this blessed and joyous event, if it were not for the pandemic problem, are all present mentally praying and also sending you their love and warm wishes. Our Theotokos, in whose*



*Orchard of Mount Athos reside your two brothers, they are praying for you as you begin your life's journey together. May She always protect you from any evil.*

*His Eminence the Metropolitan of Pisidia Soterios, our Clergymen and all the members of our Korean Orthodox Church wish you to "live a peaceful life, longevity, wisdom and love for one another in the bond of peace". And by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ may you see "children of your children". "To Him we ascribe all the glory, honor and worship. Amen.*



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