

⊕ DOIPORIKON

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OF ORTHODOX MISSION IN THE FAR EAST

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Christmas 2024
The Horse Manger in Fiji

Christmas Message

Dear children in Christ,

By the Grace of God, the blessed period of the 40-day of spiritual journey before the birth of Christ has been completed and we have been made worthy to celebrate the great event of the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. A historical event that took place in the humble manger of Bethlehem 2024 years ago and was the beginning of the salvation of our soul.

Before the birth of our Lord on earth, the miserable man was a slave to matter and time. Everything evolved around his ego. The purpose of his life was the tangible and the ephemeral. Yet the perspective of his life was death. And then - and not only then but also today and now and at every moment - something great happened and continues to happen; something exciting, something shocking, something unique and magnificent.

The Word became flesh. A great miracle. The Word of God is born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God. The order and laws of nature are defeated.

In one person, in one hypostasis of the Word, the two natures - the Divine and the human - exist inseparably, unconfused, indivisibly and inseparably. An inconceivable and incomprehensible event for our finite perception and logic.

Eyewitnesses were the Angels and Archangels, praising, singing and chanting '**Gloria to God in the highest and on earth peace among men of good will**'; the Prophets prophesying, the star shining, the Magi worshipping, the shepherds proclaiming, Joseph protecting, the Virgin Mary rejoicing. Even the monstrous Herod was worrying, and the High Priests and Scribes informing the people about the Scrip-



The apostles Peter and Paul from the Holy Church of the Holy Apostles on the island of Tonga

tures, but also the heart of each of us trembling, feeling the joy and gratitude for the great gift.

God becomes man so that the supreme potential of man may be realized. God becomes man so that man may regain his ancient beauty. God becomes man to restore to him the perspective of Heaven and eternity. God becomes man to raise man from the image of God to His likeness. God becomes man so that man may become god by Grace.

Now we know the true God and our Creator. Now we know the real purpose of our existence. Emmanuel - God with us -, the awareness of His truth in this present life and in the future, the experience of eternal life. Now we know that we have been created for Heaven and eternity. Now we know that we can over-

come the corruption of death with the power of our incarnate, crucified and resurrected Lord Jesus Christ.

It is now up to us to accept the gifts that our new-born Lord offers to us. Let us ask Him to give us the strength so as to reach out and receive His gifts, to experience them, to live with Him. He is the One who gave us life, the very Life. The One who, when we denied Him, did not deny His love for us, giving us with His Incarnation the prospect of His own life.

May the New-born Lord bless all of you and bestow His grace to your life and existence.

† Myron Metropolitan of New Zealand





An Experience of a Baptismal Divine Liturgy in the Orthodox Metropolis of Korea

We found ourselves in faraway Seoul, a city of more than ten million people! We were hosted during the Holy Twelve Days of Christmas at the headquarters of the Korean Orthodox Metropolis in Seoul. The memories are many, the feelings beautiful, the spiritual experiences precious.

In addition, we also participated in an event that we would like to share with everyone. On the Saturday before Christmas (12.21.2024), the local Church of Korea welcomed eight new members into its bosom. They were Korean nationals as well as foreigners. But what really impressed us all was the fact that the sacrament was administered just as it was in the Ancient Church. Specifically, the new converts were baptized during the Divine Liturgy.

As was the case with the baptisms of the Ancient Church, this was preceded by

intensive Catechism lessons with the catechumens (at least for three years). The evening before the baptism, “those who were converted to holy enlightenment” were baptized. They were absolved of their sins as was done by John the Baptist in the Jordan River. The next day, after the conclusion of the Orthodox service, we all gathered around the baptistry in the narthex of the church. There, following the service of catechesis for “those who are to be blessed,” the Bishop sang “Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit...” and it was followed by the Sacrament of Baptism and Chrismation. After the dressing of the newly-illuminated, who were holding hands, first, the Bishop, the Priests, and the new Christians (with their sponsors), holding candles and wearing the all-white mantles, chanted “Those who have been baptized into



Christ have put on Christ” and were led to the center of the church. The new converts took the central seats, honored as new members of the Church, while the Priests entered the Holy Altar. The biblical readings of the Apostle and Gospel of Baptism were then read, followed by the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. Everyone received Holy Communion, and just before the “Dismissal”, there was also the prescribed hair cutting.

It was an unforgettable experience, and at the same time, it followed the pace of the Early Church, when the reception of the newly enlightened Christians was completed by the local Church of Korea in the most central and essential component of the life of the Church, namely in the Divine Liturgy. We praise and glorify the Holy Trinitarian God, and we wish the newly baptized to struggle continuously toward theosis. To the Orthodox Church of Korea, we wish that its vineyard may grow and that it may salt the whole world with its agonistic course, like fine salt. Amen!



H.E. Ambrosios Metropolitan of Korea Was Elected as a President of the NCKK

On Monday 18 November 2024, at the 73rd General Assembly of the National Council of Churches of Korea (NCKK), at the Ewha Womans University, Metropolitan Ambrosios of Korea and Exarch of Japan was elected President.

In his first speech, the Metropolitan, immediately after his election, addressed the audience with the following thoughts:

Beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord,

It is customary when one assumes an executive position to make programmatic statements about how one will work.

However, we Christians should not follow the secular paths to find our way of working because we have been given the way of our ministry diakonia by Christ Himself: "But you must not do the same, but the superior among you must become like the inferior, and the leader like the servant" (Lk 22:26). Christ did not teach us the spirit of diakonia to our brethren only by His word, but also by His example by washing the feet of His disciples. When Christ finished this act of extreme humility then He said to His disciples: "I have given you an example, that you also may do as I have done" (Jn 13:15).

It is in this spirit of ministry in Christ that I take up the position of the President of NCKK and I wish to thank everyone in advance for your trust.

I promise to work with all my strength to promote unity among Christians on the one hand and to protect the environment on the other. Our struggle for unity must be based on Love and Truth. Our action as Christians on the climate crisis, from which we are suf-



fering worldwide, must be based on the teaching of the Gospel, in other words, on theological rather than political criteria.

The first report from a Christian perspective on the ecological problem was made in 1954 by the WCC. The Ecumenical Patriarchate is the first Christian Church in the world to establish in 1989 September 1 each year as a day of prayer for the protection of the environment. Therefore, from the many years of experience of the WCC and the Ecumenical Patriarchate on this huge problem, we can learn much about our action as NCKK to help address the climate crisis facing our planet.

Once again, I thank you for the honor and ask our Lord to enlighten all of us so that the works we will manage to accomplish in the new period beginning today will be for His glory and the spiritual progress of Korean society. Amen.



*Prayer for the victims of the air tragedy
(12.29.2024)*

God and Lord of mercy,

We bow our knees and hearts and we beseech and implore you for the repose of the souls of the 179 fallen servants of yours during the recent air tragedy that occurred in our country which has plunged it into great mourning.

We also pray for divine comfort and strength for the relatives, friends and acquaintances of the departed, so that they may be able to bear the cross of great pain and sorrow that their unexpected and so painful death filled their hearts.

Lord, Jesus Christ, we beg you to relieve and sweeten the aching souls from the bitterness of the death of all those who suffer because they will never see their loved ones again. For You are our only comforter and sweetness and in You, we have certain hope and unwavering trust, now and forever and in the ages to come. Amen.

Press Conference of the New President of the National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCCK)

On Thursday, November 22, 2025, the new President of the National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCCK), Metropolitan Ambrosios of Korea and Exarch of Japan, held a press conference at the Metropolis headquarters in Seoul.

In the presence of a large number of media, the Metropolitan answered a wide range of questions on the role of the Christian Churches in Korean society and how to address the problems currently facing it. In addition, he explained that the focus of his mission as NCCCK president will be based on the

trptych of “ministry (diakonia), unity and climate change”. His Eminence emphasized the Ecumenical Patriarchate’s pioneering and substantial contribution to raising awareness of the global public opinion on environmental protection.

After the press conference, the journalists were guided by Rev. Fr. Anthony Lim and Ms. Helen Hyewon Cho to the Cathedral of St. Nicholas, during which they had the opportunity to listen and learn a lot about the Orthodox Church.





Visiting the Holy Monastery of the Transfiguration of the Savior in Gapyeong

On Saturday, October 19, 2024, about 20 members of the Apostle Paul Parish in Incheon visited the Holy Monastery of the Transfiguration of the Savior in Gapyeong.

At first, they chanted the Paraklesis of the Theotokos and then Sister Agathe spoke shortly about the lives of the 24 Protectors Saints of the Church in Korea along with a touching story about St. Porphyrios.

Then the pilgrims went to the grave of the late Metropolitan Soterios to pray

for the repose of his soul and to express their gratitude.

After that, young people and adults worked together to clean the exterior and interior of the Holy Monastery.

After lunch, the pilgrims took a walk in the forest and admired the greenery, trees, mountains, and wildflowers surrounding the Monastery, thanking God for His rich gifts of His creation.

Many thanks to all who participated in the pilgrimage and volunteered to clean the grounds of the Monastery.

The Synaxis of the 24 Patron Saints of the Church in Korea

With the help of God, the Synaxis of the 24 patron saints of the Church in Korea was celebrated this year at the Holy Monastery of the Transfiguration of the Savior in Gapyeong, where their holy relics are kept, which the ever-memorable Metropolitan Soterios of Pisidia (formerly of Korea) painstakingly collected from Greece, Sinai, and Russia for the sanctification and protection of the faithful and catechumens.

The Feast of the Synaxis of the 24 Saints was first held in 1999 after the Ecumenical Patriarchate approved both the feast and the holy service (akolouthia), which was composed by Archimandrite Nikodemos Aerakis. His Eminence Soterios also saw to it that the icon of the 24 Saints was painted by the iconographer Mr. Sozos Giannoudis and that the feast was established on October 3rd, since this date is a holiday on which Koreans celebrate the creation of their ancient nation (Dangun Day ή Gaecheonjeol: The day the heaven opened) in 2,333 BC. This is when the first Kingdom of Korea was founded by King Dangun Wanggeom, called Go-Joseon (or Choson), also known as Old Korea (2333 – 108 BC).

On the evening of Wednesday, October 2nd, the Great Vespers with Artoklasia was celebrated by Father Anthony Woo. The following day, the service of Orthros and the Divine Liturgy was presided over by Metropolitan of Korea and Exarch of Japan, His Eminence Ambrosios, with co-celebrants Fr Anthony Woo, Fr Roman Kavchak, Fr Jeremiah Cho, Fr Hilarion Chung, Fr Anthony Lim, and Fr Yohan Park and the participation of a large number of faithful.

In his homily after the Gospel reading, the Metropolitan developed the greatest theme



of the unity of Christians (the branches) with Christ (the Vine) and with each other in imitation of all the Saints.

After the Divine Liturgy, a Memorial Service followed at the tomb of the blessed Metropolitan Soterios. On the occasion of the beautiful flowers offered by many faithful to the tomb of the deceased, and after congratulating them for the honor and respect they pay to their spiritual Father, the Metropolitan urged them to always have in their hearts as fragrant flowers the wise advice and the holy example of the blessed, holy Hierarch.

At the refectory, the Agape meal was provided to all the pilgrims, and the 35th Anniversary of the ordination of Fr. Anthony Woo as Presbyter (October 2, 1989) by the Metropolitan of New Zealand and Exarch of Korea Dionysios Psychas (1916-2008) was also celebrated.

Warm thanks are due to Sister Agathi and all the ladies who worked in preparation for the celebration of our Church. Our thanks are also extended to the priests, the altar boys, the choir members, and all those who came to the Monastery from far away.

The Annual Autumn International Food Festival 2024

On Sunday 22 September, with God's help, the Parish of the Cathedral of St. Nicholas in Seoul organized the annual Autumn International Food Festival in the courtyard of the Church.

The wonderful weather allowed many from the surrounding area, and even young parents with their young children, to visit the festival and taste the delicious dishes and pastries from Korea, Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Greece, America, Bulgaria, Uzbekistan, and Brazil.

Koreans and non-Koreans alike volunteered their time to prepare and im-

plement the festival, and we sincerely thank them for their effort and contribution. But most of all, the young men and women of the Syndesmos team worked really very hard. With their zeal and their smiles, they offered the visitors the opportunity to participate in the festival with joy and a pleasant mood.

We thank with great gratitude all the volunteers and wish them health, longevity, and every blessing from the Lord to themselves and their loved ones. See you at the next festival in the spring of 2025.



The Celestial (The Heavenly Nobel Prize)

It was with pride and great joy that everyone in Korea received the unexpected news of the award of the Nobel Prize for Literature to Han Kang “for her intense poetic prose that confronts historical trauma and exposes the fragility of human life”.

The now Nobel laureate Han Kang deserves our warmest congratulations because it is thanks to her God-given literary talent and hard work that she was able to win the world's most prestigious prize, the Nobel Prize.

But there is another prize, bigger than the human Nobel, which is awarded from human to human. There is a heavenly “Nobel” awarded by God to those who believe in Him and observe His holy will. It is the “prize of the higher calling” of which the apostle Paul speaks to us in his letter to the Philippians.

When Paul knew Christ, he understood that he had found the “precious pearl” (Mt. 13:46) and therefore considered every-

thing else to be unimportant. *“Indeed, I still consider everything to be a disadvantage compared to the incomparably superior good I have gained by knowing Jesus Christ my Lord. For this reason I threw everything away and considered it all rubbish in order to gain Christ and be united with him”* (Phil. 3: 8). From his first acquaintance with Christ he did not stop struggling to receive the heavenly prize. *“I strive to finish and look forward to the prize of the heavenly calling of God through Jesus Christ”* (Phil. 3:14).

The Nobel Prize and all earthly material possessions are good, but there is nothing superior to the heavenly “Nobel”, that is, “the prize of the higher calling” with which “the Lord will reward on that day, the righteous judge” (2 Tim. 4:8) all those who “fought the good fight, ran the race to the end, kept the faith” (2 Tim. 4:7).





The celebration of Saint Dionysios in Ulsan

The feast of Saint Dionysios, Archbishop of Aegina from Zakynthos, was celebrated on the weekend of 14 and 15 December 2024 in his holy church in Ulsan.

On Saturday Metropolitan Ambrosios of Korea and Exarch of Japan and Fr. Yohan Park, celebrated the Great Vespers with the Artoklasia. A sermon was delivered by the Metropolitan on the great virtue of forgiveness and raised the question for reflection “whether the example of St. Dionysios has helped us to apply Christ’s commandment to love our enemies as well.

After the Vespers, the young Dionysios Sung Dong Kim (Korean) and Seraphim Eun Kwang (Chinese), who were to be baptized the next day, confessed their sins.

On Sunday, while the Metropolitan celebrated the festal Orthros, the Rev. Fr. Yohan held the Service of making a Catechumen. It was followed by the Baptismal Divine Liturgy during which the two aforementioned young men were received into the Orthodox Church through the Sacraments of Holy Baptism and Chrismation.

After the biblical Readings, the Metropolitan delivered a sermon on the parable about the Great Supper, pointing out that “the host was angry not for what the despisers of the invitation did under various excuses, but for what they did not do” and stressed the need “to always accept with gratitude and humility the honorable invitation of God to participate in the sacramental life of the Church”.

During the distribution of the “Antidoron” and the reading of the Thanksgiving Service, the congregation had the opportunity to congratulate the newly illumined persons.

After the Services, a dinner and a meal of love were served to everyone present, during which the Metropolitan spoke to the faithful. He also expressed his sincere thanks to the parish priest Fr. Yohan, to presbytera Angela, and to co-workers for the preparation of the feast and to all the participants of the feast, wishing them a merry and blessed Christmas.



Wedding Sacrament at the Cathedral of St. Nicholas in Seoul

On Sunday, October 27th, after the Divine Liturgy and the common Agape meal, Metropolitan Ambrosios officiated the wedding sacrament of Loukas Sklavounos and Katerina Kousenidis. Originally from Greece, the couple came to Korea for their wedding. Christofer Jonker and Zoe Joy Gippeum Park were present as bridesmaids.

Following the Sacrament, a celebration with the Syndesmos members took place in the church courtyard.

May the Lord bless the newlyweds and accompany them all the days of their lives.



Visit of the Holy Monastery of the Transfiguration of the Saviour by Slavophone believers

On Saturday, December 7, 2024, a group of fifteen Slavophone believers visited the Holy Monastery of the Transfiguration of the Savior in Gapyeong in order to work on cleaning the church and the exterior of the church from falling tree leaves.

They also cleaned the area around the tomb of the ever-deceased Metropolitan of Pisidia, former of Korea, Soterios, prayed in the holy church, venerated the holy Relics of the 24 patron saints of the Church in Korea and decorated the Christmas tree in the monastery's archodariki.

In the late afternoon they left happy from their diakonia to the Holy Monastery and benefited spiritually from the grace of the Saints and the brotherly communion among them.

Warmest thanks are due to everyone for their help to the Holy Monastery. May the Lord, through the intercession of the 24 Saints, reward them “one hundredfold” for the effort of their love and selfless giving and may they celebrate a happy and blessed Christmas.



Where God is not born!

Christ is not born in the heart of any man who doesn't want it because He respects the freedom He gave him when He created him “in His image”.

Christ is not born in the heart of any man who hates his neighbour and does not go through life on the basis of crucified love.

Christ is not born in the heart of any man whose selfishness and avarice have overwhelmed him and who does not cultivate the fragrant flower of exalted humility.

Christ is not born in the heart of any man who does not follow the divine way of repentance when he sins, but stubbornly insists on satisfying his sinful passions by doing his own will and not the will of his heavenly Father.

Christ is not born in the heart of any man who theoretically and practically supports war, violence, inequality, racism, social injustice, ecological destruction.

† M. A.





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