

The Most Reverend
Metropolitan PHILIP

Archbishop of New York and
Metropolitan of All North America

The Right Reverend
THOMAS



Diocese of Charleston, Oakland
and the Mid-Atlantic

**The Self-Ruled Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese
OF NORTH AMERICA**

The Diocese of Charleston, Oakland and the Mid-Atlantic

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NATIVITY 2012

Beloved in Christ,

Greetings in the name of our incarnate God and Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ!

*However great the heaven of heavens may be, or the upper waters which form a roof over the celestial regions, or any heavenly place, state or order, they are no more marvellous or honourable than the cave, the manger, the water sprinkled on the infant and His swaddling clothes. For nothing done by God from the beginning of time was more beneficial to all or more divine than Christ's nativity, which we celebrate today. (St. Gregory Palamas, "On Christmas," *The Saving Work of Christ: Sermons by Saint Gregory Palamas*, p. 1)*

What a truly awe-inspiring gift we receive in the Nativity of the Son of God, our great God and Savior Jesus Christ! At the beginning of the homily quoted above from St. Gregory Palamas, he says that his festal address "must be exalted therefore in accordance with the greatness of the feast" so that we can "enter into the mystery... that something of its inner power might be revealed to us."

So often in our increasingly secularized and trivialized world, we fail even to take note of such greatness, such glory revealed to us lowly creatures by our God. But our distractions actually prevent us from entering into this mystery, and it so often passes us by. Let us therefore pause during this blessed feast and take heed of what St. Gregory tells us: "Please strive, brethren, to lift up your minds as well, that they may better perceive the light of divine knowledge, as though brightly illumined by a holy star."

Christ is born! Glorify Him!

Yours in Christ,

Rt. Rev. Bishop THOMAS (Joseph)

Auxiliary Bishop, Diocese of Charleston, Oakland, and the Mid-Atlantic