



**ГАВРИИЛЪ**  
**Архиепископъ Монреальскій и Канадскій**  
**The Most Reverend Archbishop Gabriel**  
**of Montreal and Canada**

**CHRISTMAS EPISTLE**

To the clergy and all God-saved flock of the Diocese of Canada

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ!

The Lord came to us from the Most Immaculate Virgin, and has "appeared upon earth and lived among men," as Baruch, the prophet of God, prophesied five hundred years before the Nativity of Christ (Baruch 3: 37).

"What do we need to do today to join the exultant witnesses who are rejoicing in Christ's Nativity, those jubilant inhabitants of earth and of heaven who throughout the ages call on us: 'Come, let us greatly rejoice in the Lord?'," the ever-memorable Metropolitan Anthony, the Abba of the Russian Church Abroad, asks in one of his Christmas epistles. "Surely we cannot become angels; neither can we follow the example of the Child's holy parents. However, there were two other groups of people, who weren't holy, but who have been vouchsafed to worship Christ and receive the grace of His coming, and those we can freely imitate, insomuch that we too may be counted worthy to share in the joy of venerating Christ's dwelling-place, the manger."

His Beatitude Anthony speaks of the poor Bethlehem shepherds who were watching over their flocks on that cold night, and the wise men of the East, who came from afar, from somewhere within present-day Iran, to worship the Christ Child.

What was it that these people of very different rank had in common, that allowed them to perceive God's revelation about the coming of Christ the Savior into the world?

Humility and readiness to submit to the will of God.

Having heard the voice of the angel, the shepherds without hesitation abandoned their everyday duties, not thinking about the wages which they may well lose, but "went with haste" (Lk. 2:16) to Bethlehem, where they, instead of kingly splendor and riches, saw, in the words of the canon of the feast, "utter poverty. For what is meaner than a cave, what is humbler than swaddling clothes? Yet therein shone forth the wealth of Thy divinity" (ypakoë after 3<sup>rd</sup> ode).

Our merciful Lord has shown His condescension also to the three reverent Gentiles who were earnestly seeking the will of God, and rewarded them according to their faith. Having beheld the star that was urging them on, they were not afraid to set out on a long journey to a foreign land. In a humble dwelling they found the “born King of the Jews”; “and when they came into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary his Mother, and fell down, and worshipped Him...” (Mt 2:11). For the feast of Christmas is none other than a great, unutterable triumph of humility.

Let us remember all this, beloved brothers and sisters, and then, as His Beatitude Anthony said, not only our own griefs, privations and wrongs will have no power to carry us away into the wilderness of despondency, but neither would the grievous afflictions with which our time abounds have power to deprive us of our quiet confidence in Christ.

We hope that the Lord, in His unspeakable mercy, will speedily make into peace the fratricidal war, which for the sins of the people is still being waged on the historical lands of Holy Russia, where our common ancestors received holy Baptism under Grand Duke Vladimir, Equal-to-the-Apostles. We wish you the fullness of joy in your hearts when you will celebrate the Nativity of Christ, the approaching Theophany, and the coming of the New Year in the faith and hope that the Newborn Child, Christ the Savior, will preserve our world, that He has saved, from perdition, and that the present tribulations will pass from us, vanish away “like the smoke vanisheth” (Psalm 68:2).

***CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!***

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Archbishop Gabriel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

GABRIEL

Nativity of Christ, 2022/2023

Archbishop of Montreal and Canada