

**BISHOP OF THE METROPOLITANATE  
OF AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND  
THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH  
S Y D N E Y**



**ЕПИСКОП МИТРОПОЛИЈЕ  
АУСТРАЛИЈСКО - НОВОЗЕЛАНДСКЕ  
СРПСКЕ ПРАВОСЛАВНЕ ЦРКВЕ  
С И Д Н Е Ј**

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BY THE MERCY OF GOD, ORTHODOX BISHOP OF AUSTRALIA AND  
NEW ZEALAND OF THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH**

**To all the clergy, monastics and faithful people of the God-saved  
Metropolitanate of Australia and New Zealand**

**Peace of God – Christ is born!**

My dear spiritual children in the Godchild Christ,

Gathered in our holy churches throughout Australia and New Zealand in celebration of the Holy Nativity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we give thanks to God for the ineffable gift of Christmas, in which the true path, content, and meaning of life was revealed and given to us.

On this day, the Holy Church proclaims the Good news that the Son of God has become the Son of man, in order to make us, the sons of men, sons of God by grace. And indeed, in the nativity of Christ, we have been reborn by the grace of God, and the image of God in us, once muddled and covered by many layers of unrighteousness, has been revealed anew.

In the sea of numerous deviating definitions of man, concocted by those whom the Holy Apostle Paul says are “fooled in their imaginations” (Rom. 1:21), Christ’s birth reveals to us anew, that true humanity is Theo-humanity, that is, an inseparable gracefilled communion of man, as an icon of God, with God.

In the Holy Nativity, order and harmony is restored to human nature. Man is once again a unified whole and is given the grace to drive away every force that threatens to dehumanize him.

Faced today with the contemporary phenomenon of a soaring number of mental illnesses, it is becoming more and more evident that an unnatural dynamic, atmosphere and content of life, have been imposed on mankind. There is a great struggle, tremendous pressure and a heavy burden on the spiritual shoulders of people. However, it is a great relief when we know that in

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this tumultuous sea of life we have the Lord Christ – the only true helmsman of the rudder of our souls, the only true Saviour! All victory is in Christ, all comfort, all strength and joy is in Him! Knowing this, dear brothers and sisters, let us bring ourselves and our children to Him, to the light of Bethlehem, to Christ Jesus.

Let us not deprive ourselves and our children of that Light which heals, restores and transfigures the human person. May the Lord's Day – Holy Sunday, become a regular day in our personal and family's calendar for attending church and participating in the Holy Synaxis – the Liturgy of the Church.

If the Orthodox surrender to the ways of the world, if we, as children of God, become sons of disobedience – opposition (Eph. 2:2), neither we, nor the world around us, can expect good. The markers or features of the spirit of today's society are symptomatic of the times which the Holy Apostle Paul prophetically describes as "the last". Namely, St Paul warns that in the "last days there will be difficult times" (2 Timothy 3:1), in which people will be possessed by the spirit of self-love, avarice, boasting, pride, blasphemy, ingratitude, insensitivity, who will not want to make peace, who will engage in slander, be cruel, treacherous, headstrong, puffed up, more lovers of pleasure than lovers of God (2 Timothy 3-5). We should be on guard against this spirit, brothers and sisters, as of the fiercest enemy, because a person who falls into this spiritual state of mind becomes a playground for the demons. He is paralysed for spiritual life, his horizons are shortened and such a man, although physically alive, is spiritually dead. Today, even the least spiritually sensitive soul can notice that the above-mentioned spiritual condition, which St Paul speaks of, is becoming more and more acute in today's society, increasingly penetrating and conquering the inner sanctum of many people, including those of numerous Christians, to whom these words of St Paul are primarily addressed to.

Therefore, dearly beloved in the Godchild Christ, let us make use of this festive season to renew our life in the Lord through the sacramental and virtuous life in the Church of Christ.

Let us always be sons of peace! Let us protect the unity of our spiritual and national corpus in Australia and New Zealand.

We should know that Satan is always prowling, observing us from afar, plotting on how to harm those who desire to live according to Christ.

Let us also remember this Christmas our brothers and sisters in crucified Kosovo and Metohija, who are constantly in danger, and who, with their very physical presence, keep the guard of Saint King Lazarus on this, the holiest Serbian land. Let us support our brothers and sisters this Christmas too, first of all with prayer, and also with our monetary contribution!

This Christmas Day, our Holy Metropolitanate is launching a special campaign in support of the Diocese of Raska-Prizren, to buy (reclaim) an ancient church from the 14th century originally dedicated to the Holy Mother of God (now Saint Sunday), built by Serbian King Marko Mrnjavcevic, located in Prizren and in ownership of an Albanian family that has offered to sell the land with the church to the Serbian Diocese of Raska-Prizren. Our clergy will inform you in greater detail concerning this matter. It is our paternal appeal to you, my dearly beloved

faithful, that we all work together to help protect this ancient sanctuary and return it to its centuries-old owner – the Serbian Orthodox Church and Serbian people.

Wishing you all an abundance of joy, strength, steadfast faith and every blessing for the upcoming New Year of the Lord, I greet you all with the joyful greeting,

**Peace of God – Christ is born! Indeed He is born!**

  
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Bishop of Australia and New Zealand  
The Serbian Orthodox Church