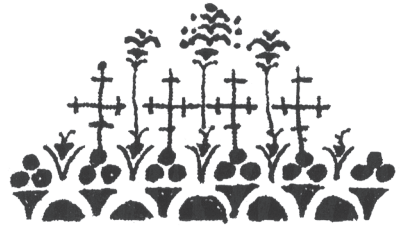


My beloved ones,



*Today Christ is born – our Brother, Friend, and Saviour,
to raise up those who have fallen, to comfort those who
are sorrowful, and to strengthen those who are weak!
Let us receive Him in the manger of our heart, that He may
illumine it with His grace and fill it with everlasting joy!*

*Under the Star of Bethlehem, and under the guidance of
the Mother of God, let us carry Him on the arms of our soul,
in the hope of salvation!*

*Your servant, brother, and friend, fellow carol-singer and
fervent intercessor in prayer,*

*+ Părintele Episcop Macarie Drăgoi
al Episcopiei Europei de Nord*

*+ Father Bishop Macarie Drăgoi of the Diocese of
Northern Europe*



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† MACARIE,

by the mercy and care of our Lord God,
Bishop of the Romanian Orthodox
Diocese of Northern Europe,

To the beloved brother priests and deacons, to the monastics labouring in ascetic life in the holy monasteries, and to the dearly loved Orthodox faithful: grace, peace, calm of heart, and joy from Christ, Who is born in the manger of Bethlehem and in the manger of our hearts, and from me, fatherly blessing and brotherly embrace!

Honoured servants of the Holy Altars,
Beloved brothers and sisters in prayer,

Contemplating God's plan for the salvation of mankind, the Holy Prophet Isaiah exclaimed: "*Who has believed what we have heard, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?*" (Isaiah 53:1). And rightly so, for if we think according to our human understanding, the wonder of the Saviour's Incarnation defies all earthly logic. The Heavenly Father willed that His Son be born in a cave, of a virgin mother of humble condition, whose only protector was an elderly carpenter; knowing that His Birth would stir scandal and opposition, that the

Divine Child would have, from the very beginning, a mortal enemy in the very king of the land, and that immediately after His coming into the world He would have to take refuge in exile.

What earthly king would ever allow his child to be left vulnerable and exposed in the machinery of an empire counting its “population” for taxation, and under the threat of a tyrant blinded by power and obsessed with glory to such an extent that, to preserve it, he resorted to the terrible slaying of the innocent children of Bethlehem? How could one imagine the birth of the Messiah from a fragile virgin, within a people governed by strict laws concerning purity, marriage, and family life?

Precisely because this prophecy was beyond comprehension, the Righteous Simeon carried his waiting across three centuries, keeping in his heart, as in a chalice, the promise of the Lord God who delayed only so that He might give Himself more fully. And because the mystery was too deep for his understanding, the Righteous Joseph needed the gentle and clarifying voice of the angel to follow the plan of the Most High.

Therefore, Christ came into the world as a child—the most vulnerable of all creation, dependent on the love and care of His mother—and into a family of humble social standing, without means or protection, facing a harsh, even brutal world. As vulnerable as the Messiah was, He was equally exposed. His Birth was announced even before it happened, by the Star that guided the three Magi. King Herod also learns of it, and all Jerusalem and Judea were troubled.

My beloved,

Christ, the Son of the Living God, could have, even in His infancy, scattered from the face of the earth those who sought His life and plotted His death. With one command, legions of angels would have dispersed Herod's murderous forces, and the Heavenly Father could have immediately enthroned the Child Jesus as king of Israel. But just as these angelic hosts did not descend to destroy the Temple guard sent to arrest the Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane, so too at the Incarnation they remained apart aside, though always near, yet not in the way the world expected.

The angels appeared to proclaim the joy of the Lord's Nativity to the pure hearts of the simple and humble shepherds, of the three pilgrim Magi, and of the God-fearing Righteous Joseph. And later, they would stand beside Christ in the agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, strengthening and comforting Him, and then they would proclaim His Resurrection to the myrrh-bearing women, amazed and trembling before the empty tomb.

From the dawn of His Nativity until the hour of His death, from the manger of Bethlehem to the Garden of Gethsemane and along the way of the Cross, our Saviour truly became and remained, the gentle Brother and steadfast Friend of each one of us—the One we call upon in the hour of trial, of loneliness, of inner wandering, and of pains that no one but He can see or understand. In the moments when depression wears us down, anxiety paralyses our heart, and loneliness

consumes us, Christ remains the Same: the One who walks with us and seeks us even when we no longer have the strength to seek Him.

We often feel vulnerable and alone, crushed under the pressure of a hurried, fragmented, and insecure world, in which the flood of information, avalanche of news, and pace of technology exhaust and unsettle us. We often live with our hearts torn between the desire to be well and the inability to rise, between the fear of losing control and the pain of seeing our own strength weaken. We find ourselves without stable guides, without spiritual shelter, and sometimes without anyone to whom we can entrust the sorrows of our heart. Anxieties flood us, worries rob us of peace, and daily agitation distances us from ourselves and those we love, making our lives, look more like a mire of helplessness than a path toward the Kingdom of God. We are weighed down by unanswered questions, sleepless nights, and endless struggles, and we forget that we are never alone, for we are together with Christ our Saviour.

We try to bear our burdens alone, trusting in our own strength and plans. When these falter or collapse, our hope falls with them into the terrible abyss of despair. Yet precisely there, in the darkest depths, where pain, weakness, sin, and fear gather, Christ enters with His gentle and piercing Light that dispels darkness. And He Himself—the Great Physician—drives away our fear and heals us, showing that there is no wound He cannot heal.

Dear brother, dear sister,

When you stop trusting in your own power and begin to lean on God, then you feel yourself lifted by *“His mighty right hand and His holy arm”* (Psalm 98:1). He brings you out of the mire of despair and leads you to a haven that is not merely an escape from trouble and distress, but a new vision of life.

The Holy Fathers teach us that forgetfulness of God is the greatest passion. Forgetting Him, we deprive ourselves of the only weapon that can overcome darkness: prayer. Then nothing prevents the enemies of salvation from wounding us through sadness, fear, despair, or blasphemy. The more we humble ourselves and call upon the Lord for help, the stronger we become in soul, overcoming deceitful thoughts and destructive passions. He cleanses our heart, clears our mind, and gives us strength and courage.

Therefore, dear brother and sister, if you feel the burden of depression, anxiety, anguish, or loneliness weighing heavily on you, do not be afraid! You are not alone! You are not lost! You are not without help! Lift your eyes to the Saviour and say, unceasingly, with all your hope: *“Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner!”*

Never forget: Christ bends first toward the broken, the sorrowful, and those who weep without comfort! For you He was born in the poor manger; for your tears and your pain He humbled Himself; for your loneliness He chose to become your Brother; for your fear He came to give you peace and courage, becoming your Friend!

Therefore, in these blessed days of His Nativity, open the door of your heart to Him! Call upon Him, welcome Him, and let Him illumine your darkness!

And you will feel how, little by little, a new heart will begin to beat within you—warmer, lighter, more alive! You will feel how dark thoughts scatter mist at sunrise! You will feel fear fade, replaced by a peace the world cannot give! You will feel grace embracing your whole being, helping you understand that you are never alone! You will feel how the bitter tear is transformed into a spring of comfort, and Christ is no longer far away, but very near—in your breath, in your thoughts, in every beat of your heart—for He has now been born in the very manger of your soul, in your inner Bethlehem. Amen.

Your servant, brother, and friend, wishing you every good and fervently praying, and now, together with you, carolling,

† Father Bishop Macarie

**Given at the Episcopal Residence in Stockholm,
Kingdom of Sweden,
on the Feast of the Nativity of the Lord,
in the year of salvation 2025.**