

SUNDAY BEFORE CHRISTMAS – OF THE ANCESTORS

"Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel"
(Matthew 1:23).

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

Only a short time separates us from the joyful Christmas holidays. Our Christian faith dates back to the Nativity of Christ, ever since the Savior of the world was born in a manger in Bethlehem. The shepherds were the first to believe in Him, escorted by the angels to the manger that night telling them this good news. The Magi from the East also went there following a bright star. They, like the shepherds of Bethlehem, came and saw the infant God Christ and worshiped Him. From this blessed time, the "light of understanding truly shone on the world." Since then, the Light of Christ has enlightened all who desire salvation.

Therefore, the meaning of the feast of the Nativity of Christ is our spiritual rebirth. Christ is born for each of us and in each of us. That is why we will hurry to prepare the manger of Bethlehem in our hearts. And as did the Magi from the East, let us prepare for Him our gifts: faith, hope, and love.

Christmas is a holiday for the soul, in which each person and family should become like the manger of Bethlehem, where the newborn Baby Jesus should visit and rest. Therefore, it is our duty to fill our hearts with the Christian virtues that the Savior brought from Heaven to earth. As a little Child, He comes into this world so that even the poorest can come to Him.

We know that the whole life of the Old Testament righteous people can be called the word "expectation." Saint Theophanes, the Hermit, gives the following example:

"Imagine prisoners in a deep dungeon. There is no light, no joy, and no hope for a better life in the deep dungeon. Suddenly, someone announces that their king is coming, with his army, to help them, that he is already on the border of their enemy and will soon summon him to a decisive battle. Imagine the joy in their hearts. And even the damp and dark dungeon is not so dark and scary for them. They are all waiting for their king to come and free them from their terrible imprisonment."

The Old Testament righteous people lived with similar expectations. Man, after the fall, was under the power of an evil spirit. The righteous of the Old Testament could do one thing – faithfully, keep the commandments of God passed down to them from previous generations. Such a state of expectation we modern Christians, feel today, standing in the temple of God. We are all waiting for a great event - the birth of the Savior Jesus Christ.

But in order for Christ to be born in our hearts, we need to prepare a place for Him there. Therefore, another word that can describe today can be called the word "preparation," especially, for us New Testament Christians. When we expect a dear guest, we carefully prepare for his arrival for a long time, and the more honored the guest, the bigger and more thorough our preparations. Here today, we are waiting for the coming of the most important, highest King of kings - Jesus Christ.

So, as believers, we must firmly believe, that the Star of Bethlehem will always show us the way and will confidently guide us through all the days of our lives. As we can see, the ancient world waited for the Messiah for many centuries, and we Christians have been rejoicing in this happiness for twenty centuries and recalling this great event. Jesus Christ promised to be with us until the end of the world. Having completed His earthly mission, He has only visibly departed from us, but our believing hearts know that He is always with us.