

*He has opened the heavens and taken up
abode in the Virgin! He comes to be born in
our flesh in Bethlehem's cave, as it is written.
He who gives life to children in the womb
Himself becomes a child. Let us go forth to
meet Him with hearts filled with zeal and joy!*
(December 20, First Kathisma Hymn)

The words of this hymn remind us that
Jesus Christ, the Son of God, truly
came a long way to reach us. As St.
Paul wrote in Philippians 2:6, 7, *"His
state was divine, yet He did not cling to His
equality with God, but emptied Himself to
assume the condition of a slave and become as
all humans are. And being as all humans are,
He was humbler yet..."*



*Thy Nativity, O Christ our God, has shown to
the world the Light of Wisdom. For by it those
who worshipped the stars were taught by a star
to adore Thee, the Son of Righteousness and the
Orient from on high. O Lord, glory to Thee!*
(Nativity Troparion)

**FOR MORE INFORMATION,
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THE REAL GIFT OF CHRISTMAS



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Jesus Christ “traveled” to our humanity. He took on our nature, accepting our poverty, weakness, trials, and suffering. The way was hard, the distance infinite. Yet, on the feast of His Birth, we celebrate the mystery of divine love—the coming of the One who suffers for our sake in order to save us.

HOW, NOT IF

While some may ask if we celebrate Christmas, it is much more important to consider how we celebrate it.

How would you receive a very important guest who came at great difficulty and expense to help you in a time of need? You would anticipate and prepare for his arrival. You would go to meet your guest, welcome him with genuine warmth and excitement, and offer him your attention and your thanks.

This is how Christ should be received, not by emphasizing earthly preoccupations of food, drink, and neatly-wrapped presents, but by

attending to and lavishing our gratitude on the heavenly God who comes to us offering the gift of divine love and presence in our lives.

The services for the Feast of the Nativity, with their poetic proclamation of the Gospel in song, open our hearts and spirits to the Lord. We are invited to “go forth to meet Him, our hearts led with zeal and joy.”

HE SHALL COME AGAIN IN GLORY

When you first came to us, O Christ, You desired to save the race of Adam. When you come again to judge us, show mercy on those who honor Your holy birth (December 21, Canon of the Forefeast, Ode 9).

The birth of Christ has always been related to His Second Coming on the last day; the way we receive Him now will determine the way He will receive us on the final day. Jesus Himself spoke of this:

As it was in Noah’s day, so it will be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating and drinking, marrying wives and husbands, right up to the day Noah went into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all... It will be the same when the day comes for the Son of Man to be revealed (Lk 17:26, 27, 30).

Our feasts and customs are no excuse for us to avoid keeping watch for the coming of the Savior; the vigilance we observe now is the vigilance with which we will welcome Him when He comes again in glory.

OUR REAL HUNGER

Christ is the food and drink that alone can satisfy our real hunger. On the Nativity we receive Him not just figuratively, but literally. He gives us the power to bear Him to a hungry and thirsty world. What greater thing can we do on this feast? What greater thing can there be for us than to prepare for and welcome our God who comes to us, radiant with humanity, meekness, and love?

Who can understand the depth of God’s wisdom and knowledge? Who will fathom the endlessness of God’s love for us? He has opened the heavens and come down to live with us—The Lord, whom all creation blesses and glorifies throughout all ages (December 23, Canon of the Forefeast, Ode 8).