

My Beloved Ones,

As you know, we are approaching the end of the Advent Fast. Fasting periods are very important for all Orthodox Christians, in order to prepare ourselves for a major feast, in this case, the Nativity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

This week we should go out of our way to prepare our souls. Of course we have spent a lot of time shopping during this season so we can demonstrate our love for friends and family—but now, this last week should be dedicated to ourselves. Love for others is the Christian way, but at the same time, we should not forget our spiritual selves.

We must think about the Nativity, and on the precious gift that God has given to us. As St. Paul states, our Father gave His Only Begotten Son out of the love and compassion he had for humankind, so that we might reconcile ourselves to Him. For our forefathers, Adam and Eve, had broken away from God through disobedience, and the only way we could reconcile ourselves was through Jesus Christ: the New Adam.

He has opened the doors of Paradise to each one of us, and it is therefore now up to us to determine how we are going to reconcile ourselves to Him. The doors began to open for us on day of our baptism, and now that we are given a foretaste of the Kingdom of God, we must work to remain there; to maintain that connection to our Lord Jesus Christ.

We can accomplish this, not only by indicating our love for each other, but also, love for our spiritual selves. We must go to confession, and must also consider how we are using our time, talent and treasure as God's children.

Of course, we must always remain optimistic, for God is our Father, who loves us and waits with open arms to receive us. But it is upon each one of us to understand our sinfulness and to ask forgiveness.

This is the path on which we will celebrate Christmas in a truly Christian way, and I hope and I pray that all of you—in the Metropolis of Atlanta and throughout the world—will find the way to return to our Lord Jesus Christ, as He is coming to the earth for you, for me, and for all of us.

+ALEXIOS

Metropolitan of Atlanta

