



Orthodox Church in America
DIOCESE OF THE MIDWEST

Archpastoral Message of the Most Reverend

DANIEL

Archbishop of Chicago and the Midwest

at the beginning of the Nativity Fast 2022

November 15, 2022

Very Reverend and Reverend Fathers, Venerable Monastics, and Beloved Faithful,

The Nativity Fast, the liturgical season which begins today, invites us to prepare our hearts to welcome our Lord Jesus Christ as we celebrate His birth in the flesh on Christmas Day. During these weeks of preparation we do not live in anticipation of Christmas alone: we are also called to rekindle our anticipation of the glorious return of Christ — when He will return at the end of time — preparing ourselves, with piety and devotion, to remember the Lord's Nativity, to await His glorious return, and to ready ourselves for the day on which the Lord will call us to Himself.

During these special grace-filled weeks of preparation, we are called to leave behind the routine way of our usual daily lives. In the midst of everything that might sidetrack us at this time of the year, we are called to be *mindful* and to *pray*. To be mindful and to be prayerful is the attitude with which we should approach every day. Unfortunately, at this time of the year we are often distracted. The holiday season as observed in society invites us to enter into a spirit of fantasy. The Nativity Fast, however, invites us to attentiveness, to look beyond ourselves, and to open our minds and hearts to the needs of our brothers and sisters who find themselves in so many types of hardship. This is a favorable time to open our hearts, to ask ourselves concrete questions about how and for whom we reach beyond ourselves and the focus our lives.

The second attitude to have in order to best experience this time of awaiting the Lord is that of *prayer*. “Look up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near,” the Gospel of Luke cautions (Luke 21:28). This special time is about entering more deeply into prayer, turning our thoughts and our hearts to the Lord who is about to come. We await Him in prayer and vigilance. Praying, waiting upon Jesus, opening our hearts to others, being mindful, and not focused upon ourselves.

As we prepare to celebrate the Lord's Nativity, be assured of my prayers and best wishes for you, your families and friends, and all your dear ones.

With love in the One Who comes to save us,

DANIEL

Archbishop of Chicago and the Midwest