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The following is the archpastoral message from His Grace, Bishop Michael, on the occasion of the feast-day of our Lord's Nativity 2011.

Archpastoral Letter for the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord 2011

Christ is Born! – Let us glorify Him!

Dearly Beloved Members of our Diocesan Family:

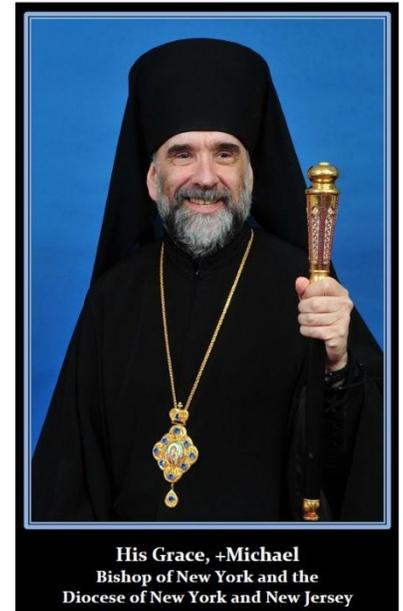
“And in that region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear.” (Luke 2:8-9)

One night when the world was very dark, God hung out a brilliant new comforting Star. One night when the world was very lonely, He gave it His Only-Begotten Son. It had been a drab world and a dull night for those shepherds as they stood on a hunch-backed hill watching their flocks. Then all at once, like someone ripping the paper off a package, the sky opened and choiring angels burst into song. The glory of God was about them and the light, like a golden finger, pointed down to a cave in the outskirts of a little town called Bethlehem.

God gets around in the unlikeliest of places. Here was this hole in the hillside, a temporary stable for animals, an emergency shelter for passing shepherds ... now the birthplace of the Savior of the world! Mary the Virgin and Joseph the Betrothed and the Lord Jesus made it so. He wanted to be born in that unlikely and unfitting place to show us how great His love for us really is!

Did you ever notice that everyone who clustered in the glory of that first Christmas had to leave something to get there? Joseph and the Theotokos had to leave their cottage in Nazareth that to them was 'home sweet home'. The Son of God Himself had to leave the angelic hosts and the courts of heaven. The shepherds had to leave their sheep in the bleak unguarded hills. And, the Magi had to leave country and family and friends.

It has been that way ever since. If we want to come close to Christ on the Feast of His Nativity, we must leave something behind. Most often it is simply sin. Many times it is the world and all its trappings and busy-ness. Sometimes it is even our self. But anything that is true and noble, just and pure, lovely and of good report (Phil. 4:8) is welcome at His manger, and His hand is raised to bless it.



His Grace, +Michael
Bishop of New York and the
Diocese of New York and New Jersey

