



*Orthodox Church in America*  
**DIOCESE OF THE MIDWEST**

**2017 NATIVITY MESSAGE OF BISHOP PAUL**

Beloved Clergy, Monastics and Faithful of the Diocese of the Midwest,

I am not particularly happy to admit it, but, I love watching TV shows on my computer, usually the three major networks. I recently watched the Christmas episode of the TV show *Bull*, which had the corny plotline of a daughter who wanted to “divorce” her father because he was too busy with his job, and was neglectful. The father had a nanny take care of her, and he would come home at early hours in the morning because of his work. The mother had died several years before. This is why the father immersed himself in his job even more—as way of coping with her death. Well, by the end of the show, the dad became more human, and repented of his poor behavior towards his daughter. They reconciled in a way that was touching, and left me crying. What? A bishop who cries over a corny plotline? What gives? Well, this corny plotline reminded me of some words of St. Gregory the Theologian on the Incarnation:

*On the other hand, for us He (the Son of God) later comes into being, that the One Who has given us being might also grant us well-being; or rather that, as we fell from well-being through evil, He might bring us back again to Himself through incarnation.*

The story that plays out in the above plotline of *Bull* is the story of many of us. We find ourselves alienated from our Maker, from our loved ones, our friends, our spouses and children and people in general. In our pursuit of the self-centered idols of this world—financial security, wealth, the good life, and worldly knowledge—we have lost sight of what it means to be a human being made in God’s image and called to grow into His likeness. The Incarnation of the Lord, in which God becomes man, is the answer to this alienation and estrangement.

Come to the Cave where Christ is born, and see what it means to be a human being! As we ponder who we are, in coming to know this newborn child, it will teach us something about what we mean to each other. God becomes man to show us the way of self-emptying love that will take Him to a Cross. It is this Cross that will take a heart of stone and make it into heart of flesh. This is what happened to the girl and her father in the corny plotline. May we embrace that corny plotline and see it fulfilled in us as we enter the Cave to ponder this great mystery that is set before us.

**Christ is Born! Glorify Him!**

With love in Christ, the unworthy

Paul  
Bishop of Chicago and the Midwest

*To be circulated among the faithful of the Diocese*

927 N LaSalle Blvd ♦ Chicago, Illinois 60610 ♦ 312-202-0420 ♦ 312-202-0427 (fax) ♦ [domoca.org](http://domoca.org)