

# Anglican Orthodox Church



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDING BISHOP

PO Box 128

Statesville, NC 28687

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**W**ERE they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time that I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the LORD.<sup>16</sup> Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.<sup>17</sup> Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken. (Jeremiah 6:15-17)

What makes the Christmas Season so warm and special – is it the gifts we receive, the ornate decorations, or the snow that many are blessed to see? Though these things contribute to making Christmas special, they are not the core reason for our joy. How do I know this? Because I have experienced Christmas around the world and know how the Holiday is viewed by those who have no idea that the holiday is centered on the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In places like Tokyo and Hong Kong Christmas is hailed as a cultural season to decorate in red, display images of a little fat man in a red suit, who never existed, and a time for the banks and commercial interests to make a fortune in sales. In many parts of the United States, Christmas can mean so little as that; but there remains a good percentage of the American people who do, indeed, remember the meaning for the season. They have resisted the phony greeting of happy holidays, or winter break, and stuck to the real name, CHRISTMAS!

Without all the commercial fanfare and splurging at sales, Christmas could have a far greater meaning to adults and children alike. Instead of songs like 'Jolly Old St. Nicolas,' 'Jingle Bells,' and "I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus," how much deeper meaning could we feel if we restricted our Holiday songs to those which actually celebrated the reality of Christmas – 'O Come All Ye Faithful,' 'Away in a Manger,' 'O Little Town of Bethlehem,' 'Silent Night,' etc.? Instead of a fat little man dressed in red who brings gifts to children around the world in one night why not celebrate the true Birth of the Gift that God has given to mankind? His gift is a continual gift and not a one-time commercially-oriented undertaking.

When I remember Christmas of old, those wonderful old Christmas hymns are the songs I remember because they convey eternal truths – not childish fantasies. If we are to teach our children such fanciful tales, let us at least be honest in telling them that Santa Claus is a fairy tale, else they may be led to wonder if we also lied about Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior.

The Christmas I experienced in Tokyo is not that much different from those I experience today in America. The great majority of people in Tokyo have no idea who Christ is, yet they celebrate Christmas exactly like most Americans with their Santa Claus props, red décor, colorful lights, and mindless shopping.

Perhaps we should try something different this Christmas by gathering the family around the fire (inside or out) and sing carols of praise and glory to God for His greatest Gift to mankind. Instead of buying gifts that are basically meaningless to affluent friends, why not search out some poor family who will subsist on the bare minimum of food and warmth this Christmas by purchasing food, fruits, candy and other treasures. Surprise them on Christmas Eve.

Let us celebrate Christmas in the full sense that the world acknowledges unwittingly in their calendars – a profound event that changed the world 2,019 years ago!

MERRY CHRISTMAS EVERY DAY OF YOUR FUTURE LIFE!

The Anglican Orthodox Church Worldwide Communion

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jerry L. Ogles". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jerry L. Ogles, DD, Presiding Bishop