

Fifth Week of Advent Fasting
The Incarnation
The Poverty of God is Our Wealth

Perhaps one of the most well-known refrains in our Coptic Psalmody comes from the Friday Theotokia:

He took what is ours, and gave us what is His, we praise and glorify Him, and exalt Him.

This verse is often meditated upon in the context of offering, where God takes the little we have and gives us from what is His. Yet, the wording here is significant: God “took.” This implies not an offering made from our end, but an act initiated entirely by Him. More importantly, this verse speaks of something far greater and infinitely more powerful – the Incarnation.

The refrain from the Theotokia finds its Biblical foundation in 2 Corinthians 8:9, where St. Paul writes:

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.”

St Cyril of Alexandria echoes this sentiment in his Festal Letter (440 AD):

*“But now the truth has shone forth in its purity. He, that is, who is above all creation has become as we are, that He might make the divine light flash upon us, and, having taught us how to make straight toward every virtue, might render us God’s sons. **For He lowered Himself, as I said, unto what is ours, that we might gain what is His, since we have been enriched in a certain way by His poverty. For if He had not shared our poverty, lowering Himself into our condition, neither would we have had His wealth, gaining through Him and from Him that sonship which properly befits Him, and Him alone.**”*

What the refrain of the Theotokia expresses is not material wealth or physical abundance. Instead, what we receive from Him is His true wealth – the wealth of adoptive sonship.

Christ’s sonship is natural, as He is of the same essence as the Father. By contrast, the sonship we gain through the Incarnation is adopted, made possible by the grace of His indwelling in us. St. Athanasius the Apostolic highlights this truth:

*On this account has the Word become flesh, that, since the word is Son, therefore, **because of the Son dwelling in us, He may be called our Father also**; for ‘He sent forth,’ says Scripture, ‘the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying Abba, Father.’ Therefore, the Son in us, calling upon His own Father, causes Him to be named our Father also (Against the Arians IV).*

May we continually remember the poverty that God took for our salvation and recognize the indwelling of Christ within us. Amen.