

My Beloved Ones,

This week our Metropolis of Atlanta continues its beloved tradition of the Winter Youth Rally. This annual event calls to my mind a recent liturgical event commemorated during this Christmas season.

Our Metropolis covers a large area, and so many of the youth in attendance come from places that, while they are all in the Southeast, have subtle differences in geography and culture; Tennessee is as unique as Georgia, which is different from Florida, and so on.

It is in this festive period that our young people—who have been shaped by all our diverse parishes—come together, unified in the Name of our Incarnate Lord. This indeed makes me think of the Magi, or Wise Men, as they are also known.

According to Tradition, the Wise Men were named Gaspar, Balthasar and Melchior, and various sources have their number as coming from countries such as Persia, India, or even China. Recognizing both the royalty and the divinity of the child, they came bearing gifts and worshipped him.

In the same way, our children come. Certainly they do not travel as great a distance—but they leave their homes and families during a blessed season, with a sense of joy and expectation. Their gifts may not be as rich as gold, frankincense, or myrrh—but they offer up their physical and intellectual talents for God's glory.

The Wise Men have the distinction of being the first pagan Gentiles who were brought to the worship of our Lord. In doing so, they bore witness to God's love, and His promise of salvation for all mankind. I am always so proud of our young people, who also gather together during this blessed event, in much the same way: to bear witness to the Light, in that spirit of fellowship, truth, and love.

May you continue to have a blessed Christmas, with prosperity in Christ, as we continue our journey through this Holy season.

+ALEXIOS

Metropolitan of Atlanta

