

CHRISTMAS CIRCULAR MESSAGE OF THE PATRIARCH OF ALEXANDRIA

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THEODOROS II

BY THE GRACE OF GOD POPE AND PATRIARCH OF ALEXANDRIA AND ALL
AFRICA TO THE PLENITUDE

OF THE APOSTOLIC AND PATRIARCHAL THRONE OF ALEXANDRIA

GRACE AND MERCY AND PEACE FROM OUR LORD AND GOD AND SAVIOUR

JESUS CHRIST, WHO WAS BORN IN BETHLEHEM

My dear and blessed brothers and sisters in Christ,

Filled with festive joy and rejoicing for the great and illustrious day of the Birthday of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ, we exclaim together with the heavenly and bodiless powers ***“Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will to men”*** (Luke 2:14). And on earth, peace! The moving proclamation of the Holy angels who on the night of the birth of our Great God appeared above the God-receiving Cave of Bethlehem, praising and glorifying God, as liturgical beings.

A universal, heart-felt, timeless request, remains unsatisfied after so many centuries! But what an irony! Christmas wishes for peace and happiness when fear, anxiety and terror, following the recent tragic events in the Middle East, have been spread over the globe; when innumerable people are uprooted from their homelands and take the bitter path of the refugee, without knowing the consequences and what will be their end. We are unimaginably pained by this “peace on earth” under conditions of terror!

In the twenty-one centuries that separate us in time from the unparalleled day of the Divine Incarnation, millions of people have sacrificed themselves in war operations, tons of blood have been shed on the battlefields and behind the lines, innumerable are the bloody pages of History, in which "people have shame the beasts."

Have we ever wondered why? Because humans wanted to build a world without God; without the peace that He gives us. Some did not hesitate to proclaim His death. Most of us have banished Him from our lives to enthrone in His place our self, our vanity and our passions, our "happiness" as we define it. Or what is even most tragic, because some people in the name of God think they have the right to wreak havoc; to exterminate innocents in horrible ways; to destroy in the blink of an eye the labours and fortunes of an entire life, to plunge defenseless women and children and entire societies into fear and insecurity.

Peace according to the eternal and infallible word of our Lord goes hand in hand with justice. As long as humans wrong others, oppress them, exploit them, belittle them, peace cannot flourish.

Our ancient Patriarchate of Alexandria and all Africa, having the entire African continent under its pastoral and Canonical jurisdiction, has the direct and bitter experience of the peoples it has served and still serves over the centuries, of the unjust and cruel exploitation of them, of the bleeding of their wealth-producing sources, of conflict being caused between them by the powerful of the earth and of their displacement from their birthplaces.

My blessed children,

According to Christian teaching, peace is primarily a gift of God; a fruit of the Holy Spirit. We are at peace when Christ dwells in our hearts; when His eternal and unchanged Gospel

law guides our steps and inspires our behavior. Peoples and nations coexist peacefully and harmoniously, when we see our fellow human beings as living images of God; if we actually respect the dignity and rights of others, persons and peoples. The word of the Apostle Paul about our Christ *"He is our peace"* (Eph. 2:14) assures us that the entire Gospel of Christ is essentially the only existing Science of Peace in the world.

With these paternal thoughts, we fervently bless you and paternally exhort each one of you individually: Open wide the doors of your hearts so that they may be filled with the peace of our Christ *"which transcends all understanding"* (Philippians 4:7). With your presence, your words and your actions, everywhere, in your family, in your work environment, in your friendly and social interactions, become peaceful people, *"walk as children of light"* (Eph. 5:7).

"Be at peace", as commanded by Paul, the great apostle of the nations, *"and the God of peace will be with you"* (2 Cor. 13:11). And this peace is a consequence of the Nativity and a gift of the Incarnate Christ. But it is granted to those who pray and strive for it: *"Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord"* (Heb. 12:14).

A joyous and peaceful Feast of the Nativity!
May the coming year 2024 be happy, blessed and peaceful!

† THEODOROS II

Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa

In the Great City of Alexandria

Feast of the Nativity 2023