

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE OF H.H. THE POPE AND PATRIARCH OF ALEXANDRIA AND ALL AFRICA

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THEODOROS II

BY THE GRACE OF GOD POPE AND PATRIARCH OF ALEXANDRIA, THE ENTIRE LAND OF EGYPT AND ALL AFRICA

TO THE FULNESS OF THE APOSTOLIC AND PATRIARCHAL THRONE OF ALEXANDRIA

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

BORN IN BETHLEHEM.

' Today Christ is born in the city of Bethlehem, the heavens are glad and all of creation rejoices"!

My dear brothers and sisters, my children,

Today is the Feast of the Nativity of Christ! The celestial and angelic hymns are heard again. *"Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill to all men"*. Once again the Church bells ring out on the entire planet, announcing that *"a Saviour is born for us today"*.

We celebrate, each in his or her own way, God's great condescension, for the salvation of mankind. His love, will once again teach us in practice, its messages. A God of love and a God of humility.

"He whom nothing can contain" becomes incarnate, to give strength and courage to weak and disappointed humanity. The eternal Lord is born to take the world out of its impasse. A world which thus far does not seem to have heard either the Angelic hymn, nor the message of *"peace from above"*. Wars, global and civil conflicts, civil wars, terrorism, refugees, uprooting, face us on a daily basis.

God responds to us: He is born humbly, in a beast's manger. He is warmed by the breath of the animals. He is born in a cave. That is why no one recognized Him, no one understood Him, none of those whose eyes were turned *"to earth"* found Him. Only the shepherds *"living in the fields"*, innocent and humble souls, received an angelic visit and were deemed worthy to be first to see *"Him who upholds all"* lying in the manger.

Everyone was waiting for Him to come! For centuries Heaven was planning His coming. For centuries, the unruly, sinful, and pathetic generation of mankind, struggled between doubt and ignorance, helplessness and impasse. Thousands of years before, Prophets foresaw and prophesied that which we celebrate today. Philosophers and tragic poets proclaimed his coming.

And Heaven replied! And the Son and Word of God came, *"born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law"*. Emmanuel was born, so that mankind could see with its own eyes what God is, to touch Him, to mock Him, to deny Him, to betray Him, to condemn Him, to kill Him and to worship Him, Resurrected on the third day.

The message of the Feast of the Nativity is addressed to us all, my brothers and sisters. Not only today, but every minute, every moment of our lives. We should do it, to experience it, a rule of faith, a sheltered harbor in all the wrecks of our

lives. Humanity, as never before, needs to leave human hearts open, keeping them warm and pure, so that Jesus may be born in them. We need not look for Him in palaces and luxurious rooms. A humble shack, like those that are everywhere in Africa is enough. He desperately seeks warmth and comfort. Tonight, God knocks on the door of our heart. Are we going to keep Him waiting?

My brothers and sisters, my blessed children,

Let us all transport ourselves noetically to the troubled parts of the Middle East, to the outskirts of Judea, to see where, but mainly why Jesus was born. Let us enter the cave, kneel before Him and say to Him: "Christ, mankind has not enjoyed the virtues of peace, as much as it desired. It lives in wars, killing joy and peace. It lives in distress and the fear of an uncertain future. The world is reminiscent of an immense battlefield, where every person turns against his brothers. Despite all the conferences and the movements for peace, it has remained, for twenty and more centuries, an 'elusive dove', an uncertain dream. Let us transcend it! Let us put aside the passions that incite us to acts of violence! Let us spread arms of love, embracing every human being. Then we will experience the Nativity all the time.

Many blessed years!

THEODOROS II

†Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa

In the Great City of Alexandria

Feast of the Nativity 2017